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THE

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CHRISTIAN'S PRAYER;

WITH

N. O T E S



ILLUSTRATIVE OF

THE CHANGE MADE BY THE PROMULGATION OF THE
GOSPEL IN THE PRESENT CONDITION AND
FUTURE PROSPECTS OF MANKIND.

BY

A LAY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

LONDON:

C. J. G. AND F. RIVINGTON,
ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL; AND
HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY.

1831.

559.

GOODWYN, PRINTER, TETBURY.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Christian's Prayer sets out with a brief summary of the religious history of the earth before christianity was promulgated, commencing from the time of the flood, there being no where any recorded accounts to show in what manner the race of men who perished on that occasion worshipped their Creator, or in what degree their neglect of his worship was connected with the profligacy and violence which brought upon them that dreadful visitation. It mentions some vicious habits and evil practices prevalent in the heathen world which christianity has corrected, improving in these respects the condition of mankind even in the present life. It recites the preservation of the knowledge of the true God among the children of Israel separated from all other people—the ungrateful return made by them for the divine favour—and the continuance of the Jews as a distinct nation,

notwithstanding their frequent transgressions, till the fulfilment of the gracious covenant entered into with Abraham (that "in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed,") by the accomplishment of the purpose for which a particular covenant had been made with the chosen people, and the law delivered through Moses at Mount Sinai.

It then proceeds to state the substance of the disclosures made by christianity; and concludes with an earnest supplication that we may be enabled by the assistance of the Holy Spirit to keep the promise made on our behalf at our baptism, and perform our duties to God and man.

The Notes are comments on different parts of the Prayer, in the nature of short essays on the several subjects there mentioned. The first relate principally to the effect which the gospel has produced on the manners and customs of the heathen world, and the latter to the difference which it has made between the disciples of Christ and those who lived under the law of Moses.

The Christian is instructed by the sacred writings in the knowledge of God, and of so much of what is to happen to man after death

as is material to direct him in the course which he should pursue on this side of the grave ; information of fearful interest to a being whose doom to endless happiness or misery is to be irrevocably fixed at the conclusion of this life, with reference to his behaviour during the brief period of his abode upon earth : while we learn from profane history in what labyrinths of darkness and error man involved himself, in all ages and countries, when, having forgotten his origin, and swerved from his allegiance to the Almighty Governor of the universe, he was left with no guide but his natural reason, and had no other means of bringing his passions and propensities under control than such as he found within his own breast.

It is of the greatest importance to keep in view the state and condition in which christianity found the heathen world, for we are so formed by nature as to be apt to regard with a careless and culpable indifference those blessings and comforts to which we have been accustomed from our infancy, and of which we have consequently never felt the want. In the most fertile and populous parts of the earth, the sun, with all the beauties it dis-

plays, attracts no particular notice from the bulk of mankind, and is beheld by the multitude with little thought concerning the hand that formed it and directs it in its daily course; whereas the same sight could seldom fail to call forth strong emotions of admiration and gratitude, if presented for the first time to persons who had been previously living in the cheerless twilight of the polar regions, or in mines under ground.

And so it is with respect to the light of the gospel—we walk by it (in part at least) without bestowing a thought upon the worse than Egyptian darkness from which it has delivered mankind. The first Christians, when they saw the veil of ignorance and superstition lifted from the fairest and most civilised parts of the earth, hailed the discoveries made to them with very different feelings: they saw that christianity presented every object round them to their view under a new aspect—that it disclosed new relations between God and man—furnished new motives of action—and enjoined new duties, pointing out at the same time the means of obtaining assistance from heaven for the performance of them—in short, they felt that to be a Christian was to be

placed, as it were, in a new world, to undergo a thorough change of heart, expressed in the figurative language of scripture by the phrases of becoming "a new creature"—of being "dead to sin"—"buried with Christ"—"saved by the washing of regeneration"—"born again," &c. &c.

It is not to be expected that the same fervor of religious sentiment should continue to prevail in the countries in which christianity has long been established, which was exhibited among the primitive converts from the gloomy doctrines and flagitious practices of idolatry ; nor indeed are all the strong expressions used in the New Testament to describe the wickedness of "the world," and the constant exhortations to the disciples of Christ to separate themselves from it, and live at enmity with it, applicable to the christian world, in which our Lord, though very negligently served, and often disobeyed, and grievously offended, by those who bear his name, is yet generally acknowledged and worshipped ; but it is profitable to look back from time to time upon the degraded state of the human mind, when Christ made his appearance upon earth, and to contrast those times with these in which it has

been our lot to be called into existence, always remembering that it is to the free gift of God, and not to any merits of ours, or any claim of superiority on our part over those of our forefathers, who have lived and died in ignorance, that we owe the privilege of having been baptised into the christian covenant, or (to speak in the words of scripture and the Church Catechism) “called into a state of salvation,” and that in proportion to the extent of the knowledge and means of grace now afforded to us will be the responsibility which must attach to us at the great day of account.

While, however, it must be useful to contemplate the changes effected by the promulgation of the gospel upon the situation of the heathen world, it is incumbent on us to attend to the alteration which it made in the condition of those who already served God under the Mosaic dispensation, and to inquire what new duties it has taught, in addition to such as were required from the Jews by the laws given from Mount Sinai, or in substitution for them. And this inquiry is more necessary in those churches or congregations of Christians in which all ranks of men are encouraged by the free distribution of the Old and New

Testaments to add to the instruction they receive from their teachers, the result of their own research and meditation, and are invited to drink themselves of the waters of life from the fountain-head, than it can be said to be in countries where the people are accustomed to take their views of religion entirely from their ministers, the private study of the scriptures by the laity being either discountenanced, or rendered impracticable, by their being shut up in a foreign language, or withheld from general circulation.

The reformed churches consider the liberty of searching the scriptures to be the birth-right of every man, and not a privilege confined to any particular order or class of men, viewing the records of the gospel left us by the apostles in the light of a proclamation of the will and intentions of the Almighty to be made known to all the earth, and not as secret archives deposited with a priest-hood, to be consulted on rare occasions, like the Sibylline books, or communicated, like the pagan oracles of old, to a few favourites of heaven.

They do not however run into the errors, unjustly charged upon them by the Romanists, of holding that the written word is to super-

sede the commissions given to God's ministers to preach and expound his will, and of supposing that any man who can read scripture will be able to comprehend it in all its parts without the aid of human learning. The circulation of the Bible, by the Bible societies, would indeed be highly injurious, if it were to lead to any such notions, instead of being taken as a recognition, on the part of those who support such societies, of their belief in the authenticity and inspiration of the sacred writings, to which we all appeal as being the word of God, and which we may, therefore, all safely join in circulating, although we may differ in regard to some of the conclusions to be drawn from them, the conclusions (it should be observed) in regard to which we differ relating much oftener to speculative matters than to such points as are calculated to affect our conduct in the affairs of this world.

We should much deceive ourselves, if we were to imagine that to give a Bible to a person willing to read it, is necessarily to make a Christian. It happened not long since to the writer of these remarks, to meet with an elderly woman (between sixty and seventy years of age), the wife of a labourer in easy circumstances,

who professed to take great delight in reading a Bible of which she had been possessed for some years; but on being questioned respecting some facts connected with the history of our Saviour, she said, that she had not got so far as the New Testament, being at present only in the Prophets of the Old. And on a fair calculation of the time she spent in reading, and the progress she made in her studies, it did not appear probable, when her age and the state of her health were taken into the account, that, unless it should please God to work a miracle in her favour, she would live long enough to arrive even at the history of our Lord's nativity.

The ignorance of this pious old woman, respecting the book put into her hands, was perhaps greater than will commonly be met with in this country, even in the lowest ranks of life; but there are many of a much higher class who, because the Old and New Testaments are equally the word of God, consider them as equally profitable for christian instruction. Some suppose that the conduct of the patriarchs and the other eminent persons, whose actions are related in the Old Testament, whenever it is not marked by an express censure, is recorded for our imitation, and that we

can hardly do wrong in following the example of those who, in the general course of their lives, enjoyed the divine favour; and a large proportion of the christian world look upon the law of Moses and the gospel as forming parts of the same moral code, conceiving the ceremonial observances only of the Jewish dispensation to have been laid aside after our Saviour's crucifixion, as having been fulfilled by the accomplishment of the event with reference to which they were instituted. But the Jewish law and the gospel, though parts of the same scheme for the benefit of man, could never continue to be the rules for the regulation of human life at the same time; the former, though introductory to the latter, being adapted to a totally different state of society from that which was to prevail among Christians, and inculcating a course of behaviour on many points irreconcilable with that prescribed by our Lord and his apostles.

The objects of the law of Moses and of the gospel, were not only different, but in some respects opposite, to each other. The former was ordained to keep the children of Israel, for a limited period, in a state of separation from the rest of the human race. Our Saviour came to break down the wall of partition, by

which that separation was effected, and to prepare for the gathering together of the inhabitants of the whole earth into one church or christian family in his name. Accordingly, the law of Moses prohibited the Israelites, after they should have gained possession of the land of Canaan (the inhabitants of which they were to destroy and not to take as tributaries), from forming alliances or friendships with any of the surrounding nations. They were neither to intermarry with foreigners, nor to eat and drink at the same board with them. All association with a stranger was pollution to a Jew, who was taught to look upon himself as one of a chosen and holy nation, and to consider and treat all other men as at enmity with God : whereas the law which regulates the intercourse of the Christian with strangers is founded on the opposite principle of universal benevolence. He is bound to consider all other men as standing on the same level in the estimation of God with himself ; all strangers are his brethren, and as such intitled, under a divine command, to his good offices ; while in his dealings with his immediate neighbour he is not to govern himself by the rules of strict justice, but is to forgive injuries, and to show himself at all

times attentive to the feelings of those around him, and zealous for their welfare.

To these topics, rather than to violations of the law of nature or the law of Moses, our Saviour called the attention of his hearers; and the Catechism of our church (with leave be it spoken) would furnish more useful instruction than it now affords, in that part of it which professes to teach our duties to our neighbour, if it were to refer the catechumen for information upon that head to some of our Lord's discourses, or of the epistles dictated by the Holy Spirit, instead of founding these duties simply on the Ten Commandments given from Mount Sinai, which certainly, to a common apprehension, enjoin nothing more upon that subject than that we should abstain from injustice; forbidding us to wrong our neighbour in his person, his property, or his good name; but being silent (as might be expected) in regard to that great duty of charity, which our Lord laboured, during the whole course of his ministry upon earth, to inculcate as the vital principle of the christian character, and which distinguishes his disciples quite as much from those who lived under the law of Moses as from the gentiles.

THE

CHRISTIAN'S PRAYER.

1.

FATHER⁽¹⁾ of all, for many an age,
In many a clime, unknown,
By savage left, and letter'd sage,
For gods of wood and stone.⁽²⁾

2.

Soon turn'd thy creature man aside
From thee and from thy way;
Soon homage to the hand deny'd
That form'd him from the clay:

3.

Forgot⁽³⁾ the power at whose command
The ark in safety rode,
When o'er the surface of the land
The swelling waters flow'd.

B

2

4.

Driven by thy wrath from Babel's wall,
While o'er the earth he ranged,
He ceased upon thy name to call,
Thy truth to falsehood changed.

5.

To sun⁽⁴⁾ and moon, thy works, he paid
Thy honours and thy praise,
Fell prostrate in the eclipse's shade,
Or comet's harmless blaze.

6.

Next worshipp'd men, who, long since dead,
Lay mouldering in the grave,
Call'd those on whom the worm had fed
To punish or to save.

7.

He bow'd him down before the brutes
By thee to serve him made,
And offer'd vows to plants and roots,
Which wither'd while he pray'd.

8.

Soon fear to sterner gods than these
Inthrall'd the human mind—
To gods, whom pain alone could please,
And sufferings render kind.

3

9.

Proud temples to such gods were rear'd,
Rich gifts on such bestow'd,
The blood (5) of man their priests besmear'd.
And on their altars flow'd.

10.

E'en in that land, whence many a shore
Now hails the book of life,
The human victim bled of yore
Beneath the druid's knife.

11.

Man's blindness left, to shine in vain,
The light within his breast,
And groped the entrails of the slain
In search of heaven's behest.

12.

Nor could Philosophy explore
Truth's long o'erclouded ray ;
The pride of Science served the more
To lead mankind astray.

13.

In Superstition's servile chain
The learned were enslaved,
And oft in folly's wildest train
Among the vulgar raved.

4

14.

Strange lessons⁽⁶⁾ to the chosen few
The priests in secret taught,
And many a deed of blackest hue
Was in their temples wrought.

15.

Their Maker's image men defaced
When they forsook his name,
Their souls with brutish lusts debased,
Till vice extinguish'd shame

16.

The dearest⁽⁷⁾ ties then ceased to bind—
Kind Nature lost her force ;
Her babe the mother's hands consign'd
To death without remorse.

17.

How throng'd⁽⁸⁾ the crowds at shows and feasts,
An envied seat to gain,
To gaze on men devour'd by beasts,
Or by each other slain.

18.

E'en Virtue's self, in those dark days,
Betray'd a mortal birth,
Nor sought on high the soul to raise,
But grovell'd on the earth.

19.

No good but fame the statesman knew,
 For that he lived and died ;
 The sage into himself withdrew,
 Nor cared for aught beside.

20.

If e'er⁽⁹⁾ compassion he bestow'd,
 Or with his anger strove,
 His kindness or forbearance flow'd
 From pride, and not from love.

21.

When Peace⁽¹⁰⁾ had sheathed the victor's steel,
 The foe he deign'd to save
 He dragg'd behind his chariot wheel,
 Or sold him for a slave.

22.

Yet was not, Lord, thy light divine
 Extinct among mankind,
 But guarded⁽¹¹⁾ by one chosen line
 And in one spot confined.

23.

E'en there did Darkness reign at times,
 E'en Israel's favour'd race
 Compell'd thee often by their crimes
 To turn away thy face.

24.

How widely from thy paths they stray'd,
 How fail'd they to fulfil
 The covenant through Moses made
 On Sinai's trembling hill.

25.

Thy people e'en in Judah's land
 To Baal bent the knee,
 Forgetting him whose mighty hand
 Had led them through the sea.

26.

Long time thy wrath did they provoke⁽¹²⁾
 Ere David's city fell;
 And far beneath a foreign yoke
 Her youth were sent to dwell.

27.

On Babylon's far distant lands
 Was heard the voice of woe,
 Lamenting that unhallow'd hands
 Had laid God's temple low.

28.

Yet stood it by thy word decreed,
 Though Israel had transgress'd,
 That in the faithful Abraham's seed
 All nations should be bless'd.⁽¹³⁾

29.

Again did Judah rear his head,
 Nor pass'd his rule away,
 Till Shiloh⁽¹⁴⁾ came, and darkness fled
 Before the rising day.

30.

Thy gracious purpose then, of old
 In mystery conceal'd,
 To all our race thou didst unfold,
 Through holy men reveal'd.

31.

To earth's remotest tribes they taught
 Thy nature and thy name;
 The signs⁽¹⁵⁾ and wonders which they wrought
 Declared from whom they came.

32.

Of judgment⁽¹⁶⁾ and a future state;
 Of death, our mortal foe;
 Of that arch fiend who lies in wait
 To work us endless woe;

33.

And of the change they told by vice
 In our condition made;
 And of the inestimable price
 For our redemption paid.

34.

For us thine only Son his head
 Bow'd down to grief and pain ;
 For us upon the cross he bled,⁽¹⁷⁾
 With malefactors slain.

35.

In form of man, from earth he rose,
 To glory in the skies;
 And thither, when this life shall close,
 We hope through him to rise.

36.

Meanwhile, on earth sharp war we wage
 Against the powers of sin;
 Fierce adversaries⁽¹⁸⁾ round us rage,
 And weak are we within.

37.

Still thou, O God, art ever nigh
 To cheer each fainting heart ;
 And on thy help may man rely,
 If he will do his part.

38.

Upon thy Church, with watchful care,
 Thy Spirit doth abide,
 Of all who seek his aid by prayer,
 The comforter and guide.

39.

Baptised⁽¹⁹⁾ into his name with thine,
 We both with Christ's adore,
 Nor seek with reason's scanty line
 The Godhead⁽²⁰⁾ to explore.

40.

Enough for us to know thy will,⁽²¹⁾
 That clearly is display'd ;
 Thy word doth teach us to fulfil
 The promise we have made.

41.

O lead us to the house of prayer
 That promise to repeat,
 And grant us at thy table there
 The⁽²²⁾ bread of life to eat.

42.

O keep us to that promise true,
 In word, and deed, and thought ;
 Bright is the hope we have in view,
 And dearly was it bought.

43.

Assist us our desires above
 This mortal life to raise,
 To dwell upon our Saviour's love,
 And give him daily praise :

44.

To tread on earth the paths he trod,
As nearly as we can,
And show our gratitude to God
In charity⁽²³⁾ to man.

NOTES
TO THE
CHRISTIAN'S PRAYER.

NOTE I.

ON POPE'S UNIVERSAL PRAYER.

THESE lines are taken (with such alterations as were necessary to make them deny what is there affirmed) from the beginning of Pope's Universal Prayer, a work which obtained much celebrity some years ago, and is still, at times, injudiciously placed in the hands of young persons ; but which, whatever may be its merit as a poem, instead of being a general prayer, suitable to men of all countries and religions, is a mixture of false facts, with sentiments rarely met with except among Christians. It begins as follows :

Father of all, in every age,
In every clime, adored,
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, and Lord.

The representation here made is at variance with all history, sacred and profane ; the latter furnishes no account of the worship of the true God, by any nation, rude or civilised ; and the inspi ls

of God's chosen people abound in every page with expressions of the divine displeasure at the idolatry of the surrounding nations, and with the most awful warnings to the children of Israel, against being misled by their examples.

Very different from this coinage of the poet's fancy is the description of the gentile world, given by St. Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. The apostle states distinctly that the general neglect of God, and the substitution of other objects of worship for the adoration due to him as their Maker, constituted the offence for which he had given over the heathen (*i. e.* all nations except the Jews) to a reprobate mind, and abandoned them to the practice of the vices and crimes of which he there enters into so sad a detail. "When they knew God," says St. Paul, "they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations." And again, "they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image, made like to corruptible men, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts and creeping things." Again, "they changed the truth of God" (the true doctrine of his nature and genuine institutions of his worship) "into a lie" (into abominable superstitions and idolatries), "and worshipped and served the creature more * than the Creator.

Nor is the Universal Prayer more accurate in its representation of the manner in which God has dealt with man than it is in the account it has given of man's behaviour towards God. The second stanza proceeds thus :—

Thou first great cause, least understood,
Who all my sense confined
To know but this, that thou art good,
And that myself am blind.

It is true that it adds, immediately afterwards, not

* Or rather "to the neglect of," or "instead of," the Creator.

very consistently with the allegation of this universal blindness—

Yet gave me in this dark estate
To see the good from ill;
And, binding nature fast in fate,
Left free the human will.

If man be blind, he is so because he has wilfully shut his eyes. Not only have the “power and godhead,” or divine perfections, of the Author and Governor of the universe, been at all times made sufficiently manifest by his works, to leave those without excuse who have forsaken his worship and his ways; but he has condescended, even from the original creation of the earth, to make himself known to man, and enter into covenants with our forefathers, by revelation. He communicated, in this manner, with Noah, the father of all our present race; he entered into more particular relations with the patriarchs and the children of Israel; and he has at last spread the knowledge of himself, through Christ and his apostles, over the whole earth. So far, moreover, is God from having confined the sense of man to know nothing concerning him except his being “good,” that he has never revealed himself simply in that character; but on the contrary, in his manifestations of himself to his creatures in this world, has always combined the attribute of goodness (or benevolence) with those of holiness and justice; representing himself as of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without indignation, and as intending to let fall the weight of his displeasure upon the guilt of those who refuse to know and serve him, or are careless of his favour. To Noah he was made known by the terrible judgment which laid the whole earth desolate, preserving eight persons only, out of all its inhabitants, from the general wreck. He showed himself to Abraham as hating vice and punishing disobedience, in the wrath poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah, and in the treatment of Lot’s

wife; and his promises to the patriarch and his successors were accompanied with severe trials of their faith on different occasions. His annunciation of himself from Mount Sinai was as "a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generations of them that hate him," as well as "showing mercy to thousands in them that love him and keep his commandments;" and his final promulgation of his will in his gospel is accompanied by threatenings still more fearful than those held out through Moses, in proportion as a state of suffering which is to last for ever, is more to be dreaded than any thing which could happen to us in this transitory life.

Men are prone, even where christianity is established, to exclude from their consideration all the attributes of God, except his goodness, while they exaggerate their own ignorance and weakness, until they have lulled themselves into a false security; and resting upon some vague and general notion of God's infinite mercy, they too often succeed in cheating themselves into a belief, that provided they avoid the perpetration of any great crime, and abstain from the grosser vices of their nature, they need not take much thought or trouble concerning what is to happen to them after this life: but whatever extenuation may be found in that view of the subject for the misconduct of men in former times, or in those lands on which the light of the gospel has not yet shone, we should remember, that they who act upon it in these days, in a christian country, have been warned, that they will become objects of God's wrath by so doing.

He has now revealed himself, in his gospel, not only as the Creator and Preserver of the universe, but as the Deliverer of all the human race from sin and death, by the sacrifice of his Son; as the Comforter, who offers to enlighten and renew our minds, through his Holy Spirit, if we will seek him by

prayer and are disposed to open our hearts to his influence ; and finally, as the Judge of all the earth, who will assuredly enter into an account, after this life, with every individual, concerning all that he has done, or neglected to do, in the present stage of his existence ; and will then doom him to endless happiness or misery according to the result of that inquiry.

NOTE II.

ON IDOLATRY.

IDOLATRY, under which term may be comprehended not only the use of images in divine worship, but the practice of paying honours to the heavenly bodies, considered as the peculiar residence of the deity, the agents of his power, or the fittest representations of his glory, is not necessarily connected with the adoration of false gods, however strong may be its tendency to lead to that consequence : nor can idolatry, in itself, unaccompanied by the superstitions to which it may give birth, be said to be forbidden by the law of nature, or the natural reason of man : on the contrary, it is so congenial to human feeling to stimulate or keep alive devotion by visible objects, that it required an express command from God, prohibiting such practices, to prevent their being universally adopted.

We are not told in the Bible what instructions were given to Adam and Noah concerning the worship to be paid to God ; though it cannot be supposed that this subject was left unnoticed in the communications made to them of the divine will upon different occasions. It is, indeed, impossible not to presume

that the first sacrifices took place under some command, since it is very unlikely that persons who were not permitted to kill animals for food should have slaughtered them as offerings to God without some express injunction for that purpose.

When a national scheme, or form of religious worship, was appointed for the chosen people, the basis of the instruction given to Moses was the absolute prohibition of every species of idolatry; not merely as likely to lead to an intercourse on matters of religion with the neighbouring nations, and to the admission of their gods to a share in the honours paid to Jehovah, but as in itself offensive to the Almighty, being calculated to turn the regards of men from the Creator to the creature. Not only were the Israelites forbidden to make themselves images, by the second commandment, and reminded, in proof of God's not choosing to have any visible representation of himself, that they had seen "no manner of similitude on the day that God spake to them in Horeb out of the midst of the fire:"* (though it should seem, that the sight of some similitude, or some brighter or more distinct appearance of God's presence or glory, than was ever seen by other men, was vouchsafed to Moses himself,†) but they were further warned to take heed lest they should lift up their eyes to heaven, and when they should see "the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even the host of heaven, should be driven to worship them and to serve them."‡

Accordingly, in the Jewish scriptures, God is uniformly represented as the sole object of religious worship to mankind, and as condescending himself to hear their prayers, and to attend to their wants. Even Moses, the mediator of the covenant with the house of Israel, who was distinguished by an inter-

* Deut. iv. 15. † Numb. xii. 3; also Exod. xxxiii. 13—23.

‡ Deut. iv. 19.

course with the deity, to which no other man was ever admitted, with whom the Lord spake, "as a man speaketh to his friend; received no other honour from his brethren after his death than that of being wept for by them during thirty days; it being the pleasure of God, on the contrary, to prevent the remains, or the tomb, of his favoured servant from becoming an object of veneration, by concealing the place of his interment:* and, although particular families and persons among the Jews were selected to offer prayers and sacrifice on behalf of the rest, yet they were never, on that account, honoured as representing the deity, nor addressed in a manner which implied any participation, by them, of the divine nature.

The Israelites were conducted through the wilderness by a cloud by day and by a fire by night; and a visible token of God's presence was exhibited to them in a luminous appearance, called the Shechinah, on different occasions, in the tabernacle, and in the first temple; but they do not seem to have borrowed any assistance in celebrating or recording the transactions of their miraculous history, from painting or sculpture, arts of which the rudest nations have availed themselves in handing down to posterity the knowledge of what has preceded their own times. The place of these aids to memory was supplied by ritual and ceremonial observances, practices, and festivals, of such a nature as not only to keep alive a remembrance of the past, but to be "a shadow of the things to come," and which, while they served to commemorate the deliverance of the people from Egypt, proved a standing prophecy of that greater deliverance by the advent of the Messiah, with a view to which every part of the Mosaic dispensation was evidently arranged.

It has been doubted whether the second command-

* Deut. xxiv. 6.

ment only prohibited the Israelites from making to themselves images, as objects of worship, or forbade the manufacture or use of them generally; and it has been observed, in support of the opinion, which would limit the commandment to the prohibition of images as objects of worship, that God himself directed the figures of two cherubim to be placed upon the ark, to which others were added in the temple, built by Solomon; that the molten sea was also placed by Solomon upon the images of twelve oxen, and that the representations of various animals are mentioned among the ornaments of his house, all which works must have been executed under the divine authority, as well as the brazen serpent, the erection of which had reference to the lifting up of our Saviour on the cross, and which was permitted to remain with the Jews, until it became an object of idolatry, and was broken to pieces on that account by Hezekiah. But this argument seems by no means conclusive; for a permission to make images on a particular occasion, or for a special purpose, is by no means inconsistent with a general prohibition of them; and it can hardly be supposed that the introduction of the cherubim into the most holy part of the temple, in which God was worshipped, or the erection of the brazen serpent, would have been warranted under the law without an express direction from God. But, whatever may have been the meaning of the second commandment on this head, it is evident that the Jews were not in the habit of placing pictures and statues in their habitations. There is no mention in the scriptures of the former as having ever been in use among them, and the latter are never spoken of in the sacred writings but in connection with idolatry and in terms of abhorrence and contempt.

In spite of the warnings and threatenings against idolatry contained in the law, and of the severe chastisement with which that offence was visited from time to time, after the death of Moses, as well as during

his life, both the use of idols and the worship of false gods appear to have prevailed more or less among the chosen people, until they were divided into the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel; after which, the national worship of the latter became idolatrous by the setting up of the golden calves at Bethel and at Dan, by Jeroboam, repeatedly described on that account in scripture as Jeroboam, "who made Israel to sin."

It was not the intention of the king of Israel, in this act, to renounce the true God, but he was apprehensive that, if his new subjects went up to Jerusalem to sacrifice, they would be inclined to look to a re-union with Judah, and he therefore appointed a place of worship within his own territories, trusting to his own sinful inventions for the maintenance of his power, instead of relying for the preservation of the independence of his kingdom upon the divine will, which had rent it from the dominion of the family of David.

Although the crown of Jeroboam was transferred to another line, two years after his death, and his house cut off, for this transgression, yet his successors trod in his footsteps, and worshipped God in a manner forbidden by the law of Moses, offering their sacrifices through persons who had no title to the priesthood, as well as at places of their own choice. But the first king of Israel that had the hardihood to substitute another deity for the power which had brought his forefathers out of Egypt, was Ahab, the seventh sovereign who held the sceptre of that kingdom, "who" says the scripture, "as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him." This rebellion against God was visited, shortly after Ahab's death, in a very signal manner on his family, as had been foretold to him in his life-time by the prophet Elisha. Jehu, who had been one of Ahab's captains, and was raised to the throne

by God, for the purpose of executing the divine vengeance, began his reign by putting to death all Ahab's descendants, who were very numerous: and he then slew all the prophets, servants, and priests of Baal, having collected them together under pretence of intending to offer a solemn sacrifice to their god, broke down the image and house of Baal, and destroyed his worship out of Israel. For these acts his children were permitted to sit on the throne to the fourth generation, though neither he nor they departed from the sin of Jeroboam, viz. the worship at Dan, and at Bethel, before the golden calves. From the days of Ahab, however, until Israel ceased to be a kingdom (Samaria, its capital, being taken, and its inhabitants carried away captive by the king of Assyria), Baal continued to be at times an object of adoration among the Israelites, sharing divine honours, by a monstrous association, with Jehovah.

Of the kings who sat upon the throne of Solomon a few only remained faithful to the worship of the God of David, whose line, however, was never broken in Jerusalem. The rest either polluted their devotional rites and ceremonies by a mixture of idolatry, or served other gods, until the offences of the Jewish nation provoked God to cast them off for a time, to destroy their temple and city, and send them captive into Babylon; but it is amongst the most remarkable circumstances in the history of this extraordinary people, that they neither embraced any part of the religion of their conquerors while in captivity, though previously so prone to the service of false gods, nor relapsed into idolatry after their restoration to their own land; although the lives of many of their rulers were scandalously profligate, and their teachers grossly corrupted the law of Moses by their traditions.

Since the purpose for which it has pleased God to separate the Jewish people from the rest of the human race has been fulfilled by the advent of the Messiah,

and the law of Moses is superseded by the promulgation throughout the whole earth of the one catholic or universal religion, giving the same interest in their common Father to all mankind, there is no longer any peculiar sanctity attached to any place or country. "The hour cometh," said our Saviour at Sychar, in answer to the Samaritan woman, who questioned him concerning the superior claim of Mount Gerizim over the city of David to be the place of sacrifice, "when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father"* (*i. e.* worship him by sacrifice offered in a particular spot); to which, after determining the question as to the relative holiness of the two places in favour of the Jews, he added, "the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."† Again, in conformity to this declaration, he says, alluding to the omnipresence of the divine influence, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them:"‡ intimating by those expressions, that, where any number of his disciples should be assembled with christian feelings and dispositions, and for christian purposes, they might reckon as securely upon the divine notice and favour, as if the visible token of God's presence (the Shechinah) formerly vouchsafed to the Jews, were actually before their eyes. The sacrifice which God will now accept is that of thanksgiving and prayer, and such sacrifice it is now permitted, under the gospel, to every man to offer, through Christ, either for himself, or for others.

The public ceremonies with which God is to be addressed by Christians are now matters of propriety

* John iv. 20, 21, 23. † Ibid. ‡ Math. xviii. 20.

and convenience, instead of being defined by positive command. Christ does not appear to have left any injunctions upon that head, nor did he even point out the manner in which the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper should be administered: and the apostles do not seem to have been directed by the Holy Spirit to establish any uniform scheme of public worship: accordingly, the Church of England declares it not to be necessary that "the traditions and ceremonies" (meaning thereby the ceremonial observances handed down in the church and not in its doctrine) "be in all places one and utterly alike, for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained contrary to God's word."

The practice of putting up pictures or statues in places of worship must be reckoned among the traditions described in this article by those who hold the opinions concerning images which are entertained by our church. We consider images as admissible into churches, provided they are only viewed there in the light of ornaments, or memorials of the history of past transactions, and are not revered or treated in any manner as objects of worship: but whenever, or wherever, there shall be danger of its being thought by the persons to whose eyes an image may be presented, that any sanctity resides in the canvass or other material: of which it may be composed, or of its being considered as a medium through which prayer may be addressed to God, it becomes incumbent on those who have the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs to guard against these errors by such prohibitions as may be required for that purpose. The early Christians seem to have acted upon this principle. In the countries in which the gospel was first preached idolatry was so interwoven with the practices and habits of the people in private life, as well as with

their public worship, that it was probably found expedient not only to exclude all representations of sacred things and persons by images from the churches, but to discontinue them elsewhere: that the application of the arts of sculpture and painting to such subjects was not usual among Christians during the first ages of christianity must be evident from this circumstance, that among the numerous memorials of the forms and faces of such individuals as were eminent in those times from their actions or stations in life, we do not meet with the recorded likeness of any of the apostles, or even of our Saviour himself.

There are indeed some communities of Christians who, considering the second commandment as having prohibited images in a place of worship, and deeming the ten commandments to be a part of the law of Moses still subsisting in full force, object, even in these times, to the introduction of pictures and statues into christian churches, in whatever light they may be viewed; while the members of the Romish church, on the contrary, holding the commandment concerning images to be an ordinance belonging to the ceremonial law, deem it to be no longer obligatory in any respect, and think themselves at liberty to pay a qualified worship to the image of Christ, or to the images of the apostles, or other holy men, presumed to be now with him in heaven: but it should be remembered, that the prohibition of idols is not confined to the second (or, as the Romanists call it, the first) commandment, being often repeated in the Old Testament and again enforced in the New; and any image becomes an idol which is worshipped as the representation either of God himself, or of any person whom God is supposed to have authorised to receive prayer and praise on his behalf; it being contrary to the divine will of God, that any creature should intercept the honours due to him. Nor can the lawfulness of the adoration of the elements in the Lord's Supper

by the Romish church be justified by their belief of their being previously changed into the body and blood of Christ, and the circumstance of their being worshipped under those denominations instead of bread and wine. If the doctrine of transubstantiation were really founded in scripture, and the body and blood of Christ were corporally present, when we approached the Lord's Table, it would still be an act of idolatry to worship them, for Christ did not receive divine worship from his disciples, while he abode in the flesh, certainly not before his burial (*viz.* at the time the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was instituted); and even if divine honours had then been paid to him it would not follow that his flesh ought to be worshipped, when he ceased to be united to it. If the body with which the Son of God was clothed on earth had been miraculously preserved, as a memorial of his crucifixion, and could now be shown, it would not be a lawful object of adoration to Christians; but, on the contrary, the worship of it would be just as idolatrous as the worship of any other material substance.

NOTE III.

ON THE TIME WHEN MAN BEGAN TO WORSHIP FALSE GODS.

It does not appear, from the short narrative given by Moses of the events preceding the flood, whether the worship of false gods was among the transgressions which called down that visitation upon the earth. The defect in Cain's sacrifice, which occasioned its rejection, was in the sentiments by which it was accompanied:* there might possibly be something

* Hebrews, xi. 4.

objectionable in the thing offered, or in the manner of offering it, but the worship was certainly paid to God himself. It is mentioned as the cause of the rapid progress of evil among the antediluvians, that the "sons of God," which are understood to mean "the offspring of Seth," took them wives of the "daughters of men, of all which they chose," connecting themselves as freely with the progeny of Cain as with their own more pious family; the expressions, however, in which the state of the earth is described in the 6th chapter of Genesis, do not enable us to discover whether the wickedness of its inhabitants, and their refusal to hearken to the warning voice of Noah, who preached righteousness to them in vain for one hundred and twenty years, before he went into the ark, proceeded from their having turned from their Creator to some other object of worship, or from their being dead to all sense and feeling of religion. The attempt to construct the tower of Babel after the flood was probably dictated by a determination on the part of the builders, to keep together, and to guard against any future exercise of the divine displeasure by the construction of a place of refuge for their security, in case of another deluge, instead of relying on the promise made by the Lord to Noah, that he would not again bring the waters upon the earth "to destroy it:" and the project indicated an impious distrust of the goodness and truth of God, rather than any doubt of his existence, or design of setting up other gods in his place.

It was not probably until after the bonds of union between men were broken by their dispersion, and the change of their language, that each nation began to follow its own inventions and devices in religious worship, and to make gods for itself. The earliest period, with reference to which the worship of strange gods is noticed in the Bible, is the time of the call of Abraham. When Joshua gathered together the tribes

of Israel at Shechem, before his death, that they might renew and confirm their covenant with God in full assembly, he reminded them, that their fathers in old times, even "Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor," served other gods, when they dwelt beyond the river Euphrates, and he impressed upon them, on that occasion, the necessity of their making a deliberate choice between Jehovah and the gods whom their fathers had served before Abraham was brought from the other side of the river, or in Egypt, or the gods of the Amorites, among whom they were now dwelling.

NOTE IV.

ON THE WORSHIP OF FALSE GODS.

THE first religious homage paid to created beings appears to have been the worship of the heavenly bodies, and in particular of the sun, which seems to have been honoured as a god in the old world from the earliest times to which the records of profane history extend, as it was found, on the discovery of America, to be in the new.

The host of heaven was indeed calculated to excite feelings of admiration, gratitude, and awe, in mankind, whether considered as symbols or as agents of the deity; and they were probably addressed at first by the oriental nations in one of these characters, rather than as being supposed themselves to partake of the divine nature; for it is not likely that the learned among the Persians, or Chaldeans, or Egyptians, who were in the habit of observing the regular motions and appearances of the heavens, and could trace the

progress of the sun and moon through the constellations, should believe that these bodies moved according to their own will, and when eclipsed, were manifesting their displeasure to mankind by withholding their light; but the multitude soon began to believe this, and they were encouraged and confirmed in these and other superstitious errors, by those who knew better, for purposes of state policy.

The object of the law of Moses was to preserve the knowledge of the true God among a particular people, and to prepare the way for a future and fuller revelation from heaven; and all the political and civil institutions of the Jews, as well as the whole system of their arrangements for the performance of divine worship, had reference to that end. The gospel was the fulfilment of the law, being that further manifestation of the nature and designs of Providence which the law contemplated. It substituted, for commandments respecting sacrifices to be offered at an appointed place, directions for a more spiritual worship to be observed throughout the whole earth; and it laid down principles and motives of action for the general conduct of rulers and their subjects in all countries and times, without prescribing any peculiar form of government. In both these dispensations, the primary subject of consideration was the relation in which man stands to God, his duties toward his fellow men being only the second; but among the heathens, religion was viewed in a very different aspect, being rarely if ever considered in any other light than as a main support of the civil power.

The heathen legislators instituted divine worship, not for the sake of serving God, but in order to govern men; and they instilled or encouraged such notions of the divinity as were best calculated for the state of society which it was their wish to introduce or to maintain. In some heathen countries, therefore, religion was a mere scheme of interest or ambition, to further

personal views ; in others, a system of pious fraud, to cheat men into good behaviour ; in most it partook of both these characters ; but in none were the mass of mankind admitted to the knowledge of the real sentiments of their superiors upon these matters, even where those at the head of affairs entertained serious opinions upon the subject, which, however, was seldom the case, their concern being with the tendency and effect of the popular belief, and not with the truth or falsehood of it. "Surely," says the author of the Book of Wisdom, whoever he may have been (for the book is a part of the Apocrypha, and not the work of an inspired writer), "vain are all men by nature who are ignorant of God and could not out of the good things that are seen know him that is ; neither by considering the works did they acknowledge the workmaster ; but deemed either the fire, or wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the violent water, or the lights of heaven, to be the gods which govern the world :"* and after representing these persons as less blamable than if they had worshipped the works of men's hands : because they "peradventure err, seeking God and desirous to find him : " he adds, that they are nevertheless not to be pardoned ; "for if they were able to know so much that they could aim at the world, how did they not sooner find out the Lord thereof ? " The answer to this question is, that the learned among the ancients, those who cultivated the human intellect, and studied the phenomena of nature, did not seek God in humility and singleness of heart, from a desire to honour him for his own sake and to do his will, but mixed up the knowledge which they had attained by contemplating the works of creation with their own inventions, in furtherance of their own wishes or designs, glorifying themselves rather than God. They

* Chap. xiii. 1, 2.

“changed the truth of God,” says the apostle, “into a lie;” they presented to the people, as objects of their adoration, beings of a character the most opposite to God: and by so doing, as well as by the modes of worship which they appointed for their false deities, they led mankind into the grossest errors concerning him, who was alone entitled to their reverence and gratitude: in consequence of which conduct on their part, their Maker gave them up to their own vain imaginations and conceits, and left them bewildered in the mazes in which they had entangled themselves, till they entirely lost sight of the real Author and Governor of the universe, and lived altogether without God in the world.

It is a curious fact, that while men grew more enlightened in other branches of knowledge, their views of divine things became more obscure. They set out under bad guidance, and every step they took served only to lead them further astray. When they first turned aside from the adoration of God himself, to pay homage to his works in the heavens, they do not appear to have had recourse to any other visible representations of the deity; but to this worship was added by degrees, in different countries, that of dead men, of beasts, birds, reptiles, vegetables, stones, things without sense or motion; and when man worshipped the works of his own hands, he fashioned them sometimes in the image of the meanest of God’s creatures, and at others in shapes more deformed or grotesque than those of any thing to be found upon the earth, or in the water under it.

When the Persians invaded Greece they are not supposed to have formed any statues of their gods, or even to have worshipped in temples, but when the gospel was preached five hundred years afterwards, every region in Asia teemed with idolatry, and the inhabitants of Ephesus (the worshippers of the image

supposed to have fallen from heaven) only gave vent to the sentiments of a great part of one of the most civilized regions of the earth, when they clamoured for two hours without ceasing, "great is Diana of the Ephesians."

We look back with fondness, after the lapse of many centuries, to the histories of ancient Greece and Rome, on account of the progress made by the human mind in those countries; we admire the elevation of character displayed in many of their sentiments and actions; and we still study the writings which they have left us as the most perfect models of genius, taste, and eloquence; but their religious opinions may furnish a useful lesson to the pride of man on the insufficiency of his intellect, in its most cultivated state, to deal with sacred subjects without the aid of revelation. The system of religion recorded by these polished nations, in their annals and most authentic histories, celebrated by them in their festivals and periodical solemnities, and interwoven in all their usages and customs of common life, consisted of nothing better than a confused heap of absurdities, the belief of which would disgrace a North American savage, or a native of New South Wales.

In their mythology, Jupiter having narrowly escaped being eaten up by his father Saturn, who had actually devoured all the rest of his children, but had been cheated by his wife into swallowing a stone instead of this fortunate infant, was nursed by a goat in the island of Crete, till in due time he dethroned his father, married his sister, and had a numerous offspring by different mistresses (some of whom fell a sacrifice to the jealousy of his justly-offended consort,) and governed the universe. The sons and daughters of the supreme being trod in the footsteps of their sire: their exploits, as well as his, were many of them actions for which men would certainly have been

hanged in christian countries ; and the worship offered to them was, on many occasions, such as it would not be possible to describe in decent language.

Greece was the most fruitful parent of these monstrous fictions ; but Rome not only adopted these fables, but began and ended its own religious course in imposture. Its first King, Romulus, who was the son of the god Mars, became an object of divine honours, through the artifices of the senators ; who being suspected of his murder, a crime which they had probably perpetrated, produced a person of credit with the people, who affirmed, upon oath, that their late king had appeared to him in a vision, to notify, that having accomplished his task of placing his new city in a condition to rise to wealth and power, he had been translated to his kindred gods. His successor Numa persuaded his subjects that the laws and institutions which he promulgated for their government were the result of his nightly conferences in a wood with a goddess named Egeria ; and in the days of the Roman empire, whenever the body of an emperor was burned after his death on the funeral pile, it was customary to let loose an eagle towards the end of the solemnity, which was accompanied in its flight by the acclamations of the pious multitude, as carrying the soul of their departed sovereign to heaven.

To us, who are conversant from our infancy with the truths of the gospel, rendered accessible to persons of all ranks and descriptions in the community by the free circulation of the Bible, it seems extraordinary, that such fictions and fables as are above described should ever have obtained credit from any but the most ignorant and vulgar minds : but we must not in this age and country measure the extent of human credulity by our own observation and experience ; the legends of the Church of Rome may furnish a parallel to many of the most improbable

tales of fabulous antiquity ; and they who know historically the implicit faith given by a considerable portion of the christian world to the accounts of the successive journeys through the air of the chapel of the Lady of Loretto may the less wonder at the assent given by the ancient Greeks to the wanderings of the island of Delos through the sea ; or at the belief of the descent of their image from heaven, entertained by the Ephesians. Nor indeed was the reverence for the inventions of human fraud confined to the lower orders of society in the modern case more than in those of ancient date. The splendor of the Virgin's chapel was certainly not inferior to that of the Ephesian temple, and however costly may have been the gifts conferred by the inhabitants of Asia on their celebrated statue, the offerings made at Loretto are a decisive proof that the Romish image has numbered among its worshippers at least as large a proportion of the opulent and powerful as its heathen predecessor.

The philosophers and sages of antiquity appear to have treated the truth of religious opinions as a mere matter of curious speculation, and whatever sentiments they might have entertained on such points in private, they upheld in public the gods whom they found in possession of divine honours. It was one of the maxims of Socrates, long celebrated as the most eminent among the heathens for wisdom and virtue, that "a wise man will worship the gods according to the institutions of the state to which he belongs." It is true, that Socrates was condemned to die, as having disowned the gods of his country, and endeavoured to introduce other divinities in their stead ; but he positively denied the truth of the accusation, and appealed for his vindication against the charge of impiety towards the gods of Athens, to his frequent attendances on their religious festivals and solemnities ; and he finally manifested his sincerity on this head by a

request which he made to his friend just before he expired, that he would pay on his behalf after his death, an offering, which he had vowed to one of the fabulous deities of those times. The learned and unlearned joined in the same external acts of devotion; they burned incense at the same altars and bowed down before the same images; and we shall not wonder at their sharing in many of the same errors, when we reflect on the tendency of the practice of superstitious rites to create or keep alive superstitious feelings, and on the strong propensity of those who have not been able to bring themselves to a settled opinion on a subject of great importance, but are floating in the wide ocean of conjecture, without chart or compass, to sympathise in the belief of the rest of mankind.

In the point of most interest to man, the professors of wisdom were further from the truth than the vulgar; for although they encouraged the people to expect that their crimes on earth would be followed by consequences in another stage of their existence, it is notorious that they did not themselves entertain any such expectation, or at least had not sufficient faith in the doctrine to make it a motive of action. "We are sufficiently acquainted," says the author of the "*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*" (who will not be suspected of speaking less favourably than they deserve of heathens) "with the eminent persons who flourished in the age of Cicero and the first Cæsars, with their actions, their characters, and their motives, to be assured, that their conduct in this life was never regulated by any serious conviction of the rewards and punishments of a future state."

In the parts in which the gospel was first preached, Philosophy, instead of enlightening the world, was amusing and perplexing a few favoured hearers (for she never condescended to address herself to the multitude) with reasonings and speculations the most remote from

common sense, and paradoxical assertions, from which the plain understanding of the unlettered man would turn with contempt. The two most celebrated sects of philosophers, at that time, were the Stoïcs and the Epicureans; the latter, rejecting as absurd the received accounts of the manner in which the gods had mixed themselves up with the transactions of men, fell into the still greater absurdity of believing that they took no interest or concern in human affairs; and supposed the whole fabric of the world, with all its inhabitants, to have been formed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, *i.e.* an accidental falling together of small particles of matter; a supposition which would be most properly met by a request that its advocates would shake together the twenty-four letters, and try what chance could do for them in producing a rational literary work from such an operation. They did not profess to devote themselves to sensual gratifications, though the modern use of the word *epicure* has sometimes exposed them to that imputation; on the contrary, they strongly recommended temperance, as the best means of preserving health and enjoying life; but they held "pleasure to be the chief good of man, and death to be the extinction of his being;" setting loose his passions and appetites from all religious restraint, and encouraging a base selfishness, which led those who acted upon it to disclaim any interest in the welfare of their neighbour, and renounce all share in the management of public affairs. The Stoïcs, on the other hand, believing that the soul survived the body, denied it nevertheless to be eternal; nor did they employ the doctrine of its future existence as an argument for the practice of virtue in this life; for they taught, in opposition to the lesson to be derived from our daily experience, and which is insisted on and illustrated by every christian teacher, that the strength of human nature is all suffi-

cient to enable man to govern his passions and propensities, and to render him independent of external circumstances. They confined all wisdom to their own sect, making it consist of a string of paradoxes: they placed perfect happiness in virtue, though stripped of every other good, and affirmed all sins to be equal, holding all deviations from right to be equally wicked; so that to kill a dunghill cock without reason was as great a crime in their eyes as the murder of a parent. They also maintained that a wise man could never forgive—never be moved by anger, favour, or pity—never be deceived—never repent—never change his mind. The public men formed in this school made frequent displays of noble and generous sentiments, and performed many splendid actions; but they strangely overestimated the power of the human mind. Their doctrines furnished no defence against pride, petulance, self-conceit, and intolerance, which on the contrary formed the basis of their artificial character. They encouraged neither fear of God nor love of man: they cultivated indeed a great desire of human applause, which seems to have been their ruling principle. As might have been expected, though armed against the common occurrences of life, they were found wanting in the hour of severe trial. They could support poverty, but sunk under disgrace: they could endure moderate pain and deny it to be an evil; but they could not conduct themselves under torture with the composure of a christian martyr, or even with the dogged fortitude of an American savage. They could dare death in the field, or meet him in the closet, but they could not behave with patience in chains, or face the eye of a triumphant enemy. The evils which they could not bear they prevented or avoided without scruple by suicide. The founder of the sect of the Stoics strangled himself with a peevish exclamation, on receiving a slight injury from a fall,

which he considered as a warning of the approach of the infirmities of age; and his followers, whenever they felt themselves too weak to contend with the afflictions of life, fled to the grave after his example.

NOTE V.

ON HUMAN SACRIFICES.

IT is an extraordinary circumstance, but it is one which the records of history forbid us to consider as at all doubtful, that there is hardly any region of the earth inhabited by man which has not at one time or other been polluted by human sacrifices. The natives of the old world, whether European, Asiatic, or African, have been alike guilty of this outrage on the feelings of our nature; and when the Spaniards discovered the continent of America, in later times, they found that the people of Mexico seldom approached the altars of their gods without sprinkling them with their own blood, drawn by wounds which they inflicted on their own bodies in the way of penance; and that they considered the sacrifice of a human victim as the most acceptable homage that could be offered to heaven.

Before the christian era, the people of Britain were celebrated among the nations of the west, for their supposed knowledge of religion, and for the extent to which they carried the practice of the superstitious rites and customs of those days. In times of great public calamity, at the commencement of a dangerous war, or on the eve of a battle, whenever, in short, it appeared necessary to appease the anger of their deities, or to purchase their favour, the Druids caused their altars to stream with human blood. On some great

occasions, they formed a colossal figure of a man, of ozier twigs, and having filled it with people, and surrounded it with hay and other combustible materials, they set fire to the pile and reduced it with all the miserable creatures it contained to ashes ; but in general when a victim was to be sacrificed, whether the offering consisted of a man or beast, the heathens preferred the slaughter of it by some sharp instrument to the use of fire for its destruction, since it was one of the artifices of the priests to persuade the people, that they could foretel future events from the more or less perfect formation of the animal which was the subject of the sacrifice, and read the answer of heaven to their petitions in the healthy or diseased state of its intestines. Even the manner in which a brute beast approached the altar, or conducted itself when brought thither, was supposed to furnish a presage of futurity ; and it is surprising how much resemblance the superstitious opinions entertained on these points in countries the most remote bore to each other.

Among the Hindoos, whose worship is still deeply stained with the blood of man, the sacrifice is voluntary on the part of the sufferer ; and the devotee throws himself at Juggernaut on the ground before the car of the deity, a large tower, carrying the idol with a number of his priests and attendants, and drawn with loud shouts and acclamations by thousands of the people ; under the wheels of which ponderous machine the victim of his own infatuation is crushed to death. A description of this mode of suicide, with other atrocities connected with the worship of Juggernaut, is given in " Buchanan's Christian Researches," pages 20 to 38 ; but it is painful to dwell on the deformed and disgusting picture of human nature displayed in such spectacles as these, which have now been exhibited for centuries in the east, in countries very far advanced in civilization.

NOTE VI.

OF THE IMPURITY OF THE WORSHIP OF THE GODS
OF GREECE AND ROME.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon those parts of the worship of the gods of Greece and Rome which outraged decency and morality, or to pursue into the secret recesses of their temples the vicious practices and mysteries which shunned the light of day, and from which the uninitiated were excluded. Purity was no attribute of the heathen deities, whether gods or goddesses: Diana herself was not immaculate: and when it is recollected in what colours Venus and Bacchus, with all the other branches of Jupiter's numerous family, were painted to the people, it may easily be conceived what kind of homage would be paid to such divinities by their votaries.

Nor were the absurd indecencies of the heathens confined to the precincts of their temples or consecrated places of worship. The orgies of Bacchus, in which women were the principal performers, and the most honourable virgins of Athens ranged through the country with the frantic rabble, are too well known to need description, and indeed could not properly be described: and in the Lupercalia, a festival celebrated at Rome, in honour of Pan, during the most civilized period of the Roman history, the Luperci or priests of the god, with young men of noble birth, and some of the magistrates, were accustomed to run through the city naked, striking all they met with a thong or strap of goat's leather, while married women of the first rank were taught to put themselves purposely in their way, under a notion that the lashes which they inflicted would facilitate the labours of such as were

pregnant, and cause those who were barren to have children. It was during one of these festivals that Mark Antony offered the crown to Cæsar, going naked for that purpose into the full assembly of the people in the forum, where Cæsar was sitting with the whole senate round him; Antony himself being at that time Cæsar's colleague in the consulship, and accompanied by his lictors, or attendant officers, in that character.

NOTE VII.

ON THE PRACTICE OF INFANTICIDE IN HEATHEN COUNTRIES.

PERSONS who are not in the habit of reading any other histories than those of christian countries must hear with astonishment of nations among whom it was not unusual to destroy their infant children, if they were weakly at the time of their birth, or deformed, or even if the circumstances of their parents made it more convenient to get rid of them than to bring them up.

This unnatural practice was permitted by most of the ancient legislators, and expressly encouraged or commanded by some of them; and the object was generally effected among the Greeks and Romans by exposing the infant in some unfrequented place, where it died of hunger or cold, or was devoured by the wild beasts. The Lacedemonians, who considered children as the property of the state, rather than as belonging to their parents, did not leave the infant's fate to the inclination or discretion of the father, but appointed certain public officers to examine the health of the child, who either gave orders for the education

of it, or ordered it to be thrown into a deep cavern in the neighbourhood of their city. At Rome, on the other hand, the right of the father over the child's life was distinctly recognized. It was customary to lay the new-born infant on the ground, and unless the father, or in his absence, some one acting on his behalf, took up the child and laid it on his bosom, it was not held legitimate. Hence among the Romans the phrase "to take up" the child, meant to preserve and educate it; while a refusal to take it up was equivalent to an order for its destruction. In one of Terence's plays, a confidential servant, ruminating in a soliloquy on the situation of his young master, who had married without his father's consent, and was anxious that his marriage should be concealed from the old man, expresses great surprise at the intentions of the young couple to preserve the child of which the wife was supposed to be then pregnant; an act which he reprobates as the conduct of persons under the influence of insanity rather than of love.

In a Roman family the father felt himself at liberty to determine the fate of his infant on its birth with the same freedom of choice which would have belonged to him in respect to any other domestic arrangement.

The practice of infanticide, however abhorrent to the principles of those who have been bred up in christian countries, appears to have been generally prevalent among the heathen nations of antiquity. It still subsists in the Chinese empire, where thousands of children are annually destroyed by their parents to avoid the expense or trouble of rearing them. Infanticide has always prevailed more or less among the Hindoos, and till about twenty years ago it was customary with some of their tribes in the neighbourhood of Bombay, called the Jaregahs, to put to death all their female infants, it being alleged in vindication of that practice, that the education of

daughters and the preservation of their honour before marriage, were attended with much trouble, and that it was more convenient to buy wives when wanted, or solicit them from another cast, than to breed them. "The mother herself," says Lieut. Col. Walker, reporting on this subject to the Bombay government in 1807, "is commonly the executioner of her own offspring; women of rank may have their slaves and attendants who perform this office, but the far greater number execute it with their own hands." The practice has now been discontinued for some time, in consequence of the friendly but persevering remonstrances of the British government against its cruelty; which, though finally successful, were at first received with some indignation. It was said that none of the tribes of the Jaregahs had ever preserved their female offspring, and that none of the powers who had been in friendship with them (not even the mighty emperors of Hindostan), had "acted unreasonably with them on this head;" *i. e.* had importuned them with their interference upon it; and a desire was intimated that the subject might not be resumed. However, in the end, the feelings of nature, called prudently into action, prevailed over the force of habit; and the chiefs of the Jaregahs entered into an engagement, in 1808, to preserve their daughters.

It is not surprising that this people should have viewed the interference of the British government upon this occasion with some degree of jealousy in the first instance; for the inhabitants of heathen countries have never yet been taught to consider the different tribes and communities of men as having any common bond of union, or as owing any duties to each other, except such as may grow out of the particular engagements, political or commercial, which they may have respectively contracted for the purposes of this world. It is from the gospel that we learn to look upon the various nations of the earth as br es

of one family, the individuals of which are all brethren, servants of the same God, and fellow-travellers towards the same home, exposed to the same perils and enemies on their road.

The Bombay government appears to have acted in this matter in the true spirit of christian rulers, mixing discretion with their zeal, and offering their advice through Lieut. Col. Walker, an accredited agent, long known and highly esteemed by the chiefs of the people to whom it was addressed. It is to be lamented that the same prudence has not always accompanied the efforts of those who have been desirous of putting a stop to the erroneous practices, idolatries, and atrocities of the natives of India. The writer of these observations had reason to know, some years since, that too much encouragement was given from this country to missionaries in our eastern empire, some of whom did not confine themselves within the limits of prudence or propriety in their proceedings in those parts, but, on the contrary, gave just cause of complaint to the Bengal government, by their conduct and language towards the government itself, as well as by the publications which they circulated for the use of the natives. Among the tracts then sent home, there was one in which it was stated broadly to the Mahometans that Mahomet was an impostor; and another, in which the Hindoos were informed that their priests, the Bramins, were a set of artful men, wilfully leading them into perdition, and that the predecessors of these Bramins were all at this very time crying out, "save, save," in a place of punishment; the former of these assertions contained a truth which the minds of the people to whom it was addressed were by no means prepared to receive; and the latter was so unwarrantable and offensive, that if they who made it had been knocked on the head by the worshippers of Bramah, or imprisoned by our own government, they must certainly have been classed among

those who suffered in some other character than that of christian martyrs.

The proceedings which ought to be adopted on the part of the British government in India, as well as by missionaries, for the more general diffusion of christian knowledge over that part of the globe, are a momentous subject of consideration. Whatever apprehensions may be entertained by some persons, that the abolition of casts which would be the natural consequence of the fall of the ancient superstitions in those countries, might eventually affect the stability of our power in the east, there are few, if any, who will go the length of contending, that our government would be justified in withholding its encouragement and co-operation from attempts to substitute the true religion for falsehood on that account, and in keeping their subjects in ignorance of the gospel of Christ for political purposes. On the other hand, it must be allowed to be the first duty of a government to see that the public peace is not needlessly or indiscreetly endangered, even for the propagation of truth: and the attention of the rulers of India ought to be particularly alive to this view of the subject, in proportion as the errors and prejudices to be removed have been the growth of many ages, and are so interwoven with the feelings, habits, and customs of the natives, that too sudden or violent a mode of encountering them may be not unlikely to add to their strength, by calling forth fresh zeal in their defence, and may possibly convulse to its foundation the whole of an extensive empire.

It may reasonably be hoped that the erection of the late church establishment in India will prepare the way for the reception of our religion there, by at least affording some proof to the natives that we respect it ourselves; and it cannot fail to assist the exertions of the missionaries, even in parts beyond the limits of

our own territories, if they will act in concert with it, and will submit to let its counsels moderate in some degree and direct their enthusiasm. It were much to be wished that those persons whose piety induces them to undertake the office of missionaries would recollect that they are not (like the first teachers of christianity) under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, but are acting on their own fallible judgment, and through the agency of those ordinary means by which, after christianity was established by signs and wonders in some parts of the earth, it has been left to extend itself gradually over the rest. They are not therefore authorised to lay aside all regard to prudential considerations and to the wisdom of this world in the pursuit of their object, to select the strong holds of fanaticism against which there appears to the human eye to be no prospect of success, but which on the contrary threaten death or danger to the assailant, and then to expect that God is to work a miracle in their support or for their rescue, overlooking the caution given by our Lord himself in the following words to his disciples, among a people much better prepared for the reception of his gospel than the Mahometans or Hindoos of the present day, "neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you."

They whose zeal for the honour of God is too ardent to submit to the controul of reason would do well to consider that, as by their labour properly directed, they may prove the instruments of God to convert an idolatrous people to his worship; so by an injudicious or inconsiderate course they may place obstacles in the way of such conversion, and retard the event which they mean to hasten. They should remember that they do not go forth to combat, armed with the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, but are

the bearers of a message of peace, of a lamp sent down from heaven to afford light to mankind, but which is misemployed when it is used to set the world in a blaze.

NOTE VIII.

ON THE CRUELTY OF SOME OF THE PUBLIC SPECTACLES AMONG THE ROMANS.

IN christian countries it is usual to execute persons, capitally convicted, in public, partly to guard against the secret infliction of unauthorised suffering, and partly in the hope that the sight of the punishment of the criminal may operate to deter the spectators from the commission of the offence of which they have witnessed the fatal consequences. But in the time of the Roman emperors, the execution of criminals was made a part of the amusements of the people; a certain number of malefactors being brought out to be killed and devoured by wild beasts at festivals and on occasions of great public rejoicings. These exhibitions were generally preceded or followed by sanguinary contests between different kinds of beasts, and by a display of the manner in which the more powerful and ferocious animals attack, or prey upon, the weaker; an immense number of which were destroyed on these occasions for the edification of the spectators. And at these spectacles, whether beasts or men were the sufferers, women of the highest rank, as well as men, freely assisted.

For more than two centuries before Rome ceased to be a republic, her citizens were accustomed to the sight, at their public shows and festivities, of human blood not tainted by any previous guilt. It was the

profession of the Roman gladiators to fight each other in the amphitheatre with deadly weapons, a great variety of which, with their respective uses, are enumerated and described by the writers of those days. There were many bodies or schools of these gladiators, who were regularly trained for the different encounters in which they were to engage, by a master to whom they had sold themselves for that purpose, who maintained them at his own expense, and hired them out for his own profit, at a very high price, to persons giving great public feasts or entertainments. They were generally matched in pairs, and continued the conflict till one was either killed or disabled, their masters and the people urging them on by loud shouts, and testifying their joy at a dexterous stroke, or the infliction of a severe wound, by exclamations of delight. When the contest was terminated by the inability of one of the combatants to continue it, owing to his being exhausted by fatigue or loss of blood, or to his having received some grievous injury, though not mortally wounded, it became a question to be decided by the spectators, whether the life of the vanquished party should be spared or he should be despatched by his adversary, and the pleasure of the people present, which rarely inclined to the side of mercy, when the obstinacy of the defeated man was sufficiently subdued to allow him to ask his life, was declared by a gesture well understood upon such occasions, being a particular mode of holding up the thumb, or bending it downwards. Those gladiators who had either conquered their opponent, or had been saved by the people's favour from slaughter, still continued to be the property of their masters, and were reserved for future conflicts on the same stage. The bodies of the dead or dying were not suffered to remain on the same spot where they fell, lest they should be in the way of the combatants who were to succeed, but were ignominiously dragged by a crook through one of the

gates of the amphitheatre, to a place appointed for the purpose, where they were stripped of their clothes and arms.

It is doubtful whether the practice of exhibiting gladiators was brought into Italy from Greece, or adopted from some of the Asiatic provinces; they were introduced originally to supply the place of human victims, which the pagans offered at the funeral piles, or near the tombs of their ancestors, from a superstitious notion, that the souls or manes of the deceased were rendered propitious by human blood, considered as a tribute from the living, with which they were highly pleased.

It appears that these combats were at first confined at Rome to the funerals of great men, but that in a short time they became common at the obsequies of private persons; and that those who left much wealth behind them sometimes allotted in their wills a sum for a combat of gladiators, this being a sure way of drawing a great concourse of people together, and having their funerals performed with great solemnity. But it appears that in process of time, the Romans grew so fond of these bloody entertainments, that not only the heir of any great and rich citizen lately deceased, but all the principal magistrates presented the people with shows of this nature to procure their favour, the Ediles, prætors, consuls, and, above all the candidates for such offices, taking this mode of rendering themselves popular.

Augustus Cæsar directed, by an edict framed for that purpose, that no person should exhibit a show of gladiators without the permission of the senate; and that the same person should not entertain the public in that manner oftener than once in the same year, even with such permission, nor with more than one hundred and twenty combatants at one time. He did not make this regulation from any feeling of concern at the waste of human life which took place on these

occasions, or on account of the cruelty of these spectacles ; on the contrary, the Romans esteemed it good policy to accustom their youth to look on blood and slaughter as matter of diversion ; but he was desirous of checking improvident expense, and of preventing men of noble birth from ruining themselves and their families by entertainments of this kind, given to obtain the suffrages of the people in elections for the high magisterial offices in the state. The object of this edict was no other than that of the English act of parliament passed in the reign of William III. to prevent expense in the elections of members of the House of Commons (usually called the treating act), and the Romans would have been allowed by their government to bribe their electors with any quantity of human blood which they could procure for that purpose, if it could have been shed without being accompanied by an inconvenient expenditure of money. The restrictions however imposed upon these spectacles by the imperial edict could not bind the emperors themselves, and the successors of Augustus found these shows so useful in keeping the people in good humour, that they celebrated them with great magnificence, and brought whole troops of gladiators at one time upon the stage. Nor were these exhibitions confined to the more cruel reigns, such as that of Nero, during which even senators and persons of the higher order of nobility were seen among the gladiators, some adopting that scandalous course through poverty, and others urged to risk their lives in that character by the influence or power of the prince ; but, on the contrary, they prevailed in their greatest extent under the mildest of the heathen emperors, under Titus and Trajan, whom it is the fashion of the philosophers of the present day to hold up as abounding with the milk of human kindness, and as the bright models of pagan virtue. The latter of these emperors is said to have produced a thousand pairs of gladiators at one solemnity. Con-

stantine, the first of the christian emperors, issued an edict against them, but the Romans had been too long habituated to these inhuman sports to be easily weaned from them ; and it was not till the reign of Honorius, nearly eighty years after the first edict against them, that they were finally discontinued ; even then the victory of christian principles in the cause of humanity was not achieved at Rome till after the death of an Asiatic monk, whom the people overwhelmed with stones when they saw him descend into the arena to exert himself personally in separating the combatants, but whose fate they lamented with becoming sorrow when the heat and excitement of the moment had passed away. The reigning emperor took advantage of the feelings of remorse which that melancholy event had created to abolish for ever this savage amusement ; and these exhibitions, in the course of which hundreds if not thousands of human victims are supposed to have been annually slaughtered in the great cities of the Roman empire, were not afterwards revived.

NOTE IX.

ON THE BASIS OF HEATHEN MORALITY.

THE most celebrated sect of philosophers in Greece and Rome, which, with all its errors, was the best teacher of morality, and numbered among its followers the public men of most eminence in civil life or in the field, previous to the establishment of christianity, made pride or self-estimation the basis of the moral character.

Their imaginary model of wisdom, which alone they dignified with the name of virtue, was a person who should have succeeded in subduing all the passions

and propensities with which he came into this world ; a being no longer subject to the influence of love or hatred, and who felt neither pity nor anger. It could not be expected that they who worked after such a pattern should cherish the seeds of benevolence in the human heart, or show much indulgence for the failings of others, or regard for their sufferings or distresses. If the pupils of this school forgave injuries or spared an enemy, they did so from an opinion of their own dignity, and of the fancied powers of a cultivated mind to look down upon all the evils of life with contempt and indifference ; a doctrine which they inculcated contrary to all experience, but to which they joined very inconsistently a strong desire of public applause, the only desire which the philosophy of those days does not seem to have thought it necessary to eradicate or confine within any limits. The foundation, on the contrary, of the temper and disposition of mind which it is the object of the gospel to form is humility, or a due sense of the weakness of human nature ; and that consciousness of our inability (even with the assistance of divine grace) to avoid offence against God, which we have been instructed by our Saviour to recognize in our daily petitions to our heavenly Father, “ to forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.”

It is obvious that the practical effects on the conduct and behaviour of men, produced by two such opposite principles of action as those above stated, must be very dissimilar ; but the national arrogance of the ancients was moreover inflamed by a notion, which the legislators and rulers of every country generally contrived to instil into the people, that they were superior to all their neighbours, either as descended from the gods of the land which they inhabited, or as being, on some other account, the favourites of heaven. With these impressions, the natives of each region of the earth were very apt to

look with a contemptuous or hostile eye on those who dwelt out of their own district; so much so, that among the Romans a stranger and an enemy were originally designated, as we learn from Cicero, by the same term. And though Cicero urges this circumstance as a proof of the mild feelings of the Romans towards the enemy, it is evident that the common term could never have been applicable, in any sense, to a person standing in that relation to the speaker, if it had indicated any feeling of kindness or benevolence to the stranger.

The common descent of all mankind from the same stock does not appear to have been a known truth among any people, except the Jews, previous to the circulation of the scriptures; and among the Jews it could not lead to the practical conclusion which we are now taught to draw from it; *viz.* the obligation we are under to cultivate feelings of good-will toward all mankind, considered as being equally with ourselves the objects of God's regard, and destined to form part of the same family with us in heaven hereafter. On the contrary, before the accomplishment of the gracious scheme of redemption by the death of Christ, the Jews were a peculiar people, separated from the rest of the world for a special purpose; while the other nations of the earth were lying under the divine displeasure, without any common tie, having all indeed departed from the true God, but by no means agreeing in the choice of the object to be worshipped or served in his stead.

NOTE X.

ON THE TRIUMPHAL SOLEMNITIES OF THE ROMANS.

THE heathen nations appear to have always held themselves justified in putting to death the captives whom the fortune of war had delivered into their hands, even after the termination of hostilities, and when, owing to the subjugation of the state to which the prisoners had belonged, they could no longer be formidable; nor indeed does much distinction appear to have been made in the application of this doctrine between those who had been taken prisoners in the field, and those who, from their age, sex, or habits of life, were incapable of bearing arms.

It must also be admitted, that the most warlike nations were seldom sparing in the exercise of this supposed right of conquest; and that the history of human warfare was far from exhibiting pictures of milder feelings on the part of the conquerors toward the vanquished, as mankind advanced in civilization, previous to the promulgation of christianity. Among the Greeks, the bloody scene of victory was sometimes illumined by an occasional ray of generosity when the conflict was over; as in the behaviour of Alexander the Great to the wife and family of Darius, after the battle of Issus, and in his treatment of king Porus, whom he restored to liberty and power, and converted from an enemy into a friend and ally; but among the Romans the insolence of victory showed itself in the darkest colours, after the din of arms had ceased, in their triumphs, those pageants of pride and cruelty which were acted in honour of such of their successful generals as had left a certain number of dead bodies slain in the field of battle.

Neither rank, nor sex, nor childhood, nor old age, nor any considerations of regard for fallen greatness, or past glory, or for the former display of those qualities or virtues which most command the compassion and respect of a noble enemy, could exempt the unhappy captive of a Roman general from being exposed in chains to the public gaze, among a crowd of miserable wretches, who were detained, after having endured the scoffs and insults of a brutal and licentious populace, to be slaughtered as soon as the triumphal pomp ascended the capitol, or otherwise disposed of by a violent death, or strangled in prison, after the conclusion of the ceremony.

When Perseus, king of Macedon, who, after being defeated in several battles, fought in defence of his extensive dominions, had surrendered himself to the mercy of Æmilius Paulus, requested that he might be spared the indignity of being produced as a public spectacle at that general's triumph, he was sneeringly told, that "what he asked had always been in his own power and was so still:" an answer by which it was intimated to him that he might withdraw himself from the disgrace which he feared by a voluntary death. As he did not take the advice given him, he was compelled to walk before the consul's chariot, drest in a mourning habit, with his two sons and a daughter, and is supposed to have perished miserably soon afterwards in prison, by being kept from his natural rest by the malicious cruelty of his gaolers. Jugurtha, king of Numidia, long the powerful antagonist of the Roman arms, after being delivered up at the close of the contest, by the treachery of a neighbouring sovereign (his father-in-law), was led before the triumphal car of Marius, in a state of distraction; and having been stript of the ornaments of his person with such violence that parts of his ears were torn away with his ear-rings, was thrown into a dungeon in the common goal, and there left to die

of hunger. The young and lovely Sophonisba, the daughter of a celebrated Carthaginian commander, fell, together with the crown of one of the African kingdoms, into the hands of Masinissa, on the defeat of her husband Syphax; Masinissa, to whom she had been betrothed before she became the wife of his competitor, married his beautiful captive. But he was the ally of Rome when this event took place, acting in a subordinate military command to the consul Scipio; he was therefore rebuked for presuming to think that a captive of the Roman arms could be thus disposed of, without the sanction of the senate, and the young king found that he could no otherwise secure his youthful bride from the indignity of a Roman triumph, than by sending her a cup of poison, which she swallowed without hesitation.

The manner in which Cleopatra contrived by her death to disappoint the hopes entertained by Augustus Cæsar of reserving her to grace his triumph, is well known. And even in later times, when christianity had in some degree mitigated the ferocity of the Roman manners, though it was not yet become the established religion of the empire, Zenobia, the high-minded queen of Palmyra and the East, yet more illustrious for the spirit and talent with which she long defended her dominions against the arms of the emperor Aurelian, in a glorious though unsuccessful struggle, than for her beauty, accomplishments, and learning, although her life was spared after her captivity, and she was permitted to spend the remainder of her days in Italy, in a private station, was yet exhibited in the first instance in the triumphal procession of the conqueror, and marched on foot before his magnificent chariot, shackled with golden fetters, and loaded with a chain of the same metal upon her neck, of such weight as to require the assistance of a slave to enable her to support it.

The triumph of Aurelian is the last but one to be

found in the annals of the Roman people; that of Dioclesian and Maximilian, which took place about five and twenty years afterwards, being the last. The latter, however, was more of the nature of a commemoration of Dioclesian's having entered the twentieth year of his reign, than of that of an ancient Roman triumph. For two of the four Cæsars, who performed the exploits celebrated on that occasion, were absent, and the images of the captive wives and sisters and children of the king of Persia were exhibited in the triumphal procession, instead of their persons; the captives themselves having been sent home on the conclusion of the peace lately made between the Roman and Persian empires. The historian of "the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" observes, that this triumph of Dioclesian was remarkable as being the last that Rome ever beheld; adding, that "soon after this period, the emperors ceased to vanquish, and Rome to be the capital of the empire." The historian however need not have sought for a reason for the disuse of the practice of gratifying the people with these shows after the transfer of the imperial residence to Constantinople, by Constantine, the first christian emperor, in the want of occasions on which such spectacles could have been exhibited, since Constantine himself might have found matter enough to be the subject of a triumph in his own victories over the Goths, if such an exhibition had not been contrary to the principles of the religion which he professed. But among the many errors and evil practices which the gospel displayed in their true colours, it showed in its proper light the deformity of these monstrous pageants of the pride and cruelty of man, nor has it ever tolerated these deliberate and cold-blooded insults upon a vanquished enemy.

The Roman triumph ceased of course on the accession of the first christian emperor, and there is nothing resembling such spectacles to be met with in

the records either of the more civilized or less refined ages of any christian people.

Among the many benefits which christianity (however imperfectly understood or practised) has conferred upon mankind, must be reckoned that of having taken from the scourge of war a considerable portion of its severity. An Englishman may be allowed to contrast the treatment of John of France, when taken prisoner by the Black Prince, with that which he would have experienced in heathen times at the hands of a Roman conqueror; and a native of Europe in the present day may reflect with satisfaction that when, during the short triumph of the French revolution, the republicans ordered their armies to give no quarter, the decree passed for that purpose became a dead letter as soon as published; and that when Bonaparte was placed by the fortune of war at the disposal of the European powers (some of whom had too much reason to entertain feelings of personal hostility towards him), though born to no hereditary dignity, nor having so conducted himself while on his temporary throne as to call forth, in any peculiar degree, the sympathy of his cotemporaries, having moreover given full warning, by his return from Elba, of the importance of maintaining a strict watch over his motions, and exhibiting such restlessness and petulance of temper as rendered it very difficult to combine acts of kindness and courtesy with the precautions required for keeping him in a private station, he was exposed to no indignity either on his way to St. Helena, or during his abode there, nor subjected to any further restraints on the island than such as were deemed absolutely necessary to prevent him from re-appearing on the political stage, to unfurl again the standard of revolution in France, and disturb a second time, by his individual efforts, the peace of the world.

NOTE XI.

ON THE SEPARATION OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL FROM ALL OTHER NATIONS, PREPARATORY TO THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST FOR THE REDEMPTION OF MAN, AND TO THE PROMULGATION OF A BETTER COVENANT THAN THAT ENTERED INTO AT MOUNT SINAI—ON THE ABROGATION OF THE LAW OF MOSES AFTER IT WAS FULFILLED BY THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH IT HAD BEEN ORDAINED—AND ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE JEWISH SABBATH, GIVEN TO THE ISRAELITES AS A SIGN BETWEEN GOD AND HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE, AND SUNDAY, OR THE LORD'S DAY, APPOINTED AS THE DAY OF WEEKLY WORSHIP AMONG CHRISTIANS IN MEMORY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S RESURRECTION.

THE purpose of God, in separating the chosen people from all other nations, was to preserve among them the knowledge of himself, which appears to have been obliterated from the minds of the rest of mankind soon after the flood, and to make them the guardians and depositaries of his gracious promises, called by St. Paul "the oracles of God," which were partly contained in the sacred books in their keeping, and partly shadowed out in the events of their history, and in certain ceremonial observances which they were enjoined to practise and hand down from father to son.

The subject of these promises was the redemption of man, or the deliverance of the human race from sin and death, to be achieved by a person announced in God's first declaration to Adam as the seed of the woman, who should "bruise the head of the serpent;"

promised to Abraham afterwards as his seed, in whom "all the nations of the earth should be blessed ;" and in later times particularly described as the Son of David by the prophets, David himself being one of them.

The Jewish law has been said to consist of three parts (although no mention of any such division is to be found in the law itself) ; the first relating to the worship of God, the second to the civil polity of the Jews, and the third to the regulation of their moral conduct. It is agreed by all that the two former parts, or the ceremonial and political precepts, have never been binding upon Christians ; but it is held by some, that the moral part of the law continues in full force.

The seventh article of the Church of England says, on this head, that "no christian man is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral ;" and the following observations on that article are contained in Bishop Tomline's "Elements of Christian Theology," a work for which, on account of its general merit, all members of the Church of England entertain great respect. After remarking on the two former parts of the law, as temporary, the bishop says, at the end of his observations on the seventh article of our church, "on the other hand, the moral precepts, resting upon fixed and immutable principles, being founded on the essential difference between right and wrong, and being equally applicable to all persons, at all times, will be binding upon every man to all eternity ; and this, which appears from the whole tenor of the New Testament, is expressly asserted by Christ himself, in his sermon upon the mount—'Think not I am come to destroy the law and the prophets ; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil ; for verily I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled ;' in which

declaration our Saviour evidently refers to the Mosaic law ; and all the moral precepts contained in the Old Testament are not only separately confirmed and enforced in the New, but many of them are extended to a greater degree of strictness and purity."

There can be no doubt that communications made to man, in any of the revelations vouchsafed to him, from which it shall appear that certain acts are pleasing to God, or the contrary, ought to be observed by all who are in the same situation with the persons to whom such intimations of the divine will were given; but if the observations cited above were intended to imply that every act forbidden or commanded, in what is considered as the third part of the above division of the law of Moses, is to be taken as prohibited or enjoined in these days, and that the precepts of the Mosaic law are to be looked to generally as the rules of moral conduct, under the gospel, the former of these propositions (with due reverence be it spoken) is not warranted by the sermon on the mount, nor by any other part of the New Testament ; and the latter would bring down the moral character of christianity to a much lower standard than is consistent with the doctrine of Christ and the apostles. We should much undervalue the lessons and precepts recorded in the New Testament if we were to consider the commandments given at Mount Sinai as containing the essence of the moral law now existing, and to treat the gospel as a mere re-publication of the law of Moses, with a few additions and improvements. The gospel covenant has its foundation in the promises made to Abraham, and not in the law framed for the Israelites when they became a distinct nation, four hundred years afterwards; and the description of the duties now required from Christians will not be found in the communications made through Moses, but must be sought in the revelation brought down from heaven by Christ himself (who was at the same time the bearer

of the good tidings, and the subject of them), and more fully unfolded after his ascension by the Holy Ghost—a revelation which disclosed facts and circumstances affecting the future condition of mankind, of which the world had previously no knowledge nor conception, changing the relations which subsisted between God and man, and between different branches of the human race, and imposing new duties and obligations upon every individual, whether Jew or Gentile, in consequence of such disclosure.

The Jews learned, under Moses, to know God as the almighty creator of the universe—as the temporal ruler of their own nation, separated from the rest of mankind—as their deliverer from bondage in the land of Egypt—as their preserver by miraculous supplies of food in the wilderness, and as their conductor to a flourishing country, in which obedience to the divine will had the promise of signal prosperity; but whatever intimations may have been given of the future designs of Providence for man's benefit, either to Abraham, or any other of the patriarchs, before that time, or to the prophets in later days, the Mosaic law did not make God known as the Redeemer of mankind from sin and death, by the sacrifice of his Son, or as the sanctifier and purifier of the human heart, by the operations of his Holy Spirit. “The law was given,” says the apostle, “by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

It is true, that the principles of our duty to God, and of our duty to our neighbour, are laid down by Christ himself in terms taken from the law; “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;” but the practical precepts to arise from these principles for the regulation of the conduct of a Christian are very different from those which

were given through Moses for the observance of the Jewish people.

The Jews had neither the knowledge of the nature and ways of the Almighty which have been communicated by the gospel, nor the privilege now enjoyed by men of all nations to which Christ has been preached of an immediate access to the throne of grace. They sought God in his temple at Jerusalem, and sacrificed to him through an order of men specially appointed for that purpose; whereas, if the Spirit of God does not now dwell within the worshippers themselves, he will not be found by them elsewhere: the Christian may present the sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving on his own behalf, without the intervention of any other created being; his offering is his own heart, and he is himself the temple of God.

The Jews were not commanded to spread the knowledge of God's name generally through the earth, but they were to manifest their zeal for his honour by watching over the worship paid to him among themselves, and punishing with unrelenting rigour all offences against him committed within their own territories. If the inhabitants of any of their cities should at any time be seduced into the worship of strange gods, the offenders and their cattle were to be smitten with the edge of the sword, and the city itself, and the spoil thereof, were to be burned with fire; and the city was not to be rebuilt, but was to be left a heap of ruins; and in case a proposition to serve strange gods were made to a Jew by "his brother, the son of his mother, his own son, or his daughter, or the wife of his bosom, or his friend, which was as his own soul," he was not only warned against consenting or hearkening to such advice, but he was prohibited from concealing or sparing the offender; his eye was not to pity him, and his hand was to be the first upon him to stone him to death. See Deut. ch. 13.

When James and John asked our Lord, on the

refusal of the inhabitants of the Samaritan village to receive him, whether they should command fire to come down from heaven, after the manner of Elias, they spoke in the spirit of the Jewish law, a law ushered in with thunders and lightnings, and the sound of a loud trumpet striking terror into its hearers, occasioning the people to remove in dismay from the place whereon they stood, and making Moses himself to quake with fear, but by no means in the tone of him who came to save and not to destroy, and whose advent was announced by the joyful voices of angels, proclaiming, "Peace on earth, and good-will towards men!" The law of Moses did not simply authorise those to whom it was given to vindicate God's honour by fire and sword, it commanded them in express terms to do so; but the gospel of Christ contains no such commission or authority; and if this difference, amongst others, between the old and new dispensations had not been strangely overlooked, the inquisition could never have arisen in any christian land, nor persecution have stained the Church of Christ with the blood either of heretic or infidel.

The duty of a Jew towards his neighbour was confined within a very narrow field; for he had no neighbours, in the christian sense of the word, except those of his own blood, and such strangers as had been received into the Jewish church, or as were permitted to dwell among the Jews without embracing their religion—abstaining, of course, from the exercise of any idolatrous rites, or the adoration of strange gods. The nations whom they found in possession of the promised land were objects of their enmity, to be exterminated by degrees (in obedience to a divine injunction) by the sword; and with the inhabitants of the surrounding countries they were not allowed to have much communication:—they carried on no commerce by sea, nor could they have any intercourse or sympathy with those nations who lived at a distance from Judea,

being themselves under the special care of Providence as a holy people, while the remainder of the earth laboured under the divine displeasure, and worshipped gods the service of whom every true son of Abraham was taught from his infancy to look upon with fear and abhorrence.

Good-will towards those who were beyond the Jewish pale, and the forgiveness of injuries, were doctrines which can hardly be said to have occupied a place in the law of Moses. When our Lord represented the Samaritans to the Jewish lawyer as his neighbours, he spoke a language that was new to his hearers, though the people of Samaria, calling themselves the descendants of the ten tribes of Israel, acknowledged the whole law contained in the books of Moses, and only differed from the Jews themselves as to the spot in which their common God was to be worshipped; and when our Saviour told Peter, in answer to the question put by the apostle, whether seven instances of offence after pardon should exclude a brother from future forgiveness, that he must not consider seventy and seven such offences as having that effect, he taught him a lesson which was not to be found in the Jewish law.

It must be obvious, that the very purpose for which the Mosaic dispensation was introduced, *viz.* that of keeping the descendants of one family in a state of separation from the rest of mankind, and more particularly from their immediate neighbours, necessarily gave the law an opposite character from that of christianity in all matters in which strangers were concerned; but even in cases in which a Jew was called upon to perform the common offices of humanity to one of his own people, it could not be expected that he should feel the same sympathy towards his distressed neighbour as would be excited upon a similar occasion among Christians, since he commonly considered the circumstances under which the demand upon

compassion or assistance was made as indicating guilt in the sufferer and as a mark of the divine displeasure set by God himself on the party requiring pity or relief. When the disciples asked our Lord, in the case of the man born blind, whether the blindness had been occasioned by the sin of the individual himself in some supposed state of pre-existence, or by that of his parents, they only assumed, in the particular instance, what was in general true under the Jewish covenant, *viz.* that adversity and trouble in this world were the consequence or punishment of particular misconduct; and when St. Paul taught Christians to look on temporal sufferings under the gospel dispensation as proofs of the favour of God, when, in his Epistle to the Romans, he represented those who believed in his doctrine as not only rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, but as glorying "in tribulations also;" and when he told his new converts, that if they were "without chastisement, they were bastards, and not sons," he placed the privations and calamities of this life in a very different light from that in which they had been viewed heretofore, converting those very circumstances which must be supposed to have operated in some degree among the Jews as grounds of alienation, into bonds of friendship and good-will among Christians, and announcing to us, that the afflictions of a distressed neighbour, instead of authorising us to look upon the sufferer as a person of less estimation than ourselves in the eyes of God or man, constituted in general an increased title upon his part to our affectionate regard and respect.

The practice of identifying the moral part of the law of Moses with the gospel, and of considering the precepts of the Old and New Testaments as forming parts of the same moral code, or rather of deriving the pure stream of christian morality from the law, as its fountain-head, instead of looking for the principles which should guide our conduct, to the words and

actions of our Lord himself, and the doctrines delivered after his ascension by the Holy Spirit, has been mainly encouraged or supported by the passage cited above from the sermon on the mount, which, however, seems to be misunderstood when it is so applied. When our Saviour, in the middle of a discourse, in which he is evidently stating how much more he requires of his disciples than was enjoined by Moses, says, "I am not come to destroy the law and the prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil," the true meaning of his words seems to be, that he is not come in opposition to the law, but in furtherance of its object—not to set aside the covenant made through Moses, but to perform it: as one might say who came to pay off a bond debt—not to avoid or cancel the deed, but to fulfil its conditions. When he says, that not one jot or tittle of the law shall pass away till all be fulfilled, the plain import of the saying appears to be, that all and every part shall have its full and complete effect and accomplishment: the ceremonial parts were fulfilled by the great event of the atonement, prefigured therein,—the political part, by the continuance of the Jews as a nation in Judea, until the advent of the promised Messiah, and their dispersion in consequence of their refusal to receive him as their king—and the moral part, by the substitution for its precepts of a much purer system of morality under a new teacher and guide, in the person of the Holy Spirit, operating in the first ages of christianity by visible signs and wonders, as well as by its secret influence upon the human heart, and in the modern times by the latter mode only: and when our Lord goes on to say, that "Whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven," &c., he says no more, than that they who should take upon themselves to depart from the law of Moses, no portion of which was at that time abrogated or fulfilled, but which Christ

himself observed during the whole of his life, should not be as highly esteemed, and accepted with as much favour, among the ministers of the dispensation about to be opened to the world, as those who should adhere to it while it remained in force, and like himself fulfil its righteousness. He could not intend to say that every precept of the law of Moses was to remain unaltered under the gospel, for he decidedly repealed the permission given by Moses respecting divorces in that very discourse, and contrasted with the doctrines he was then teaching several of the commandments given of "old time," by which were evidently meant those given originally to the Jewish nation, and not the more modern interpretations and glosses of the scribes and pharisees. Conformable to the declaration of our Lord, that he was "not come to destroy the law but to fulfil it," as above explained, is the assertion in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, ch. iii. v. 30, when he is reasoning on the effect of his preaching the abolition of all distinctions between the circumcised Jews and the uncircumcised gentiles, and of the justification of man by faith without the works of the law, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! yea we establish the law," an expression equivalent to that of fulfilling the law used by our Lord, the law being "a school master to bring us to Christ," and "Christ being the end of the law." See Gal. ch. iii. v. 24. Rom. ch. x. ver. 4.

Nor do those persons who profess to hold that the ceremonial and political parts only of the Mosaic law have ceased to be binding, carry on their own belief to its obvious consequences, for they do not teach that we are now prohibited from taking the old bird with the young ones in the nest, or from mixing linen and woollen in the same garment, nor from some other practices forbidden by injunctions which it would not be possible to bring under the head of ceremonial or political institutions.

Bishop Burnet, in his exposition of the seventh article of the Church of England, takes a somewhat different view of this subject from that stated above, for he says, that by the moral law, in the article alluded to, are meant "the ten commandments, with all such precepts as do belong to them, or are corollaries arising out of them;" and the Church Catechism, after making the catechumen repeat a tolerably full summary of his duties to God and to his neighbour, teaches him to profess that he has learned all this from the ten commandments, as recorded in the 20th chapter of Exodus. It is certainly our duty "to worship God, and to serve him all the days of our lives;" and it is also our duty "to honour and obey the king," and all others in authority, as well as our parents; and "to order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters;" and "to keep our bodies in soberness and temperance," as well as in chastity; and "to learn and labour truly to get our own living," if our condition be such as to make our exertions necessary for that purpose; and generally "to do our duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call us," exerting ourselves, when our labour may not be wanted for our own support, to do good to others; and no person who reads the New Testament can be ignorant that all this is required of us; but when Christians are referred, for the proof of these several injunctions, to the commandments delivered to the Israelites from Mount Sinai, in the manner described in the 20th chapter of Exodus, they are certainly sent to that part of the Bible for what is not to be found there, but must be sought in the precepts of a dispensation far more excellent than that of the Jewish law, promulgated under very different circumstances, and breathing a very different spirit.

It is observable, that when the ten commandments were given to the Jewish people, God did not introduce the mention of himself as the ruler of the whole

earth, but announced his claim to their gratitude and obedience in terms which do not in any manner denote the relation existing between him and any other nation. "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; thou shalt have none other gods but me." It is from other parts of scripture, and not from these words, that we learn the whole earth to be governed by the providence of Jehovah, without the intervention of other objects of our adoration, and know that all the gods of the heathens are fictitious.

"By a moral law," says Bishop Burnet, "is to be understood, in opposition to positive, a law which has an antecedent foundation in the nature of things, that arises from eternal reason, is suitable to the frame and powers of our souls, and is necessary for the maintaining of human society;" but it would be difficult to reconcile three out of the four first commandments with this definition, as applicable to mankind in general; for the second commandment, forbidding the making or using images in divine worship, never could have been other than a positive law, there being nothing immoral in symbolic representations, in the nature of things, and antecedent to command; and the injunction respecting the manner in which the sabbath was to be observed, under the fourth commandment, is admitted by all to have been a positive law, framed for the Jewish people only, whatever may be thought respecting the obligations on Christians to keep holy a seventh day, as arising out of that commandment, concerning which there will be occasion to speak hereafter.

There is no passage in the New Testament in which the four first commandments, called the first table, are cited or referred to as explanatory of our duty to God. It may fairly be presumed, that if our Saviour had intended the ten commandments to survive the rest of the Jewish law, and form the basis

of the christian code, he would have given some intimation of their superior force or sanctity by referring to them, or to some one of them, when he was asked which was the great commandment in the law; he does not, however, take his answer from the decalogue, but lays down general principles from another part of the law for the regulation of the feelings and affections of the heart, instead of enjoining or prohibiting particular actions.

That the ten commandments were intended to continue permanently in force, as a part of the law of Christ, has sometimes been inferred from the words spoken by our Lord to the young ruler, who asked what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life; but when the whole of what was said on that occasion is duly considered, it is evident that our Lord's expressions do not lead to any such conclusion. According to the account given of this conversation by St. Matthew (for it is represented by three of the Evangelists with some slight variation), our Lord said, in answer to the question put to him, "Keep the commandments:" and on the young man's asking which commandments, Christ repeated the substance of the second table, wholly omitting the four first commandments, putting the fifth last, and adding "love thy neighbour as thyself." "All these things," said the young man, "have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" Jesus then said unto him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me." Upon this the young man is stated to have gone away sorrowful, for he had large possessions. Our Saviour then remarks on the obstacle opposed by wealth to a rich man becoming his follower, or entering the kingdom of heaven; the disciples are amazed at his observation, and say among themselves, "who then can be saved?" upon which our Saviour says, that "with men this is

impossible; but with God all things are possible." Peter afterwards observes that the apostles have left all and followed him, and is told that every one who shall have left house or relation for his sake, shall receive a hundred fold here, and in the world to come life everlasting. It is quite clear that the words "keep the commandments," in the foregoing conversation, are not used to distinguish the decalogue from the rest of the Jewish law, but only point out the first of the two requisites which our Lord invariably sought in those whom he selected or accepted as his followers, *viz.* that they should observe the precepts of the existing law, and this the young man appears to have done; but in the second particular which our Lord appears to have required from his disciples, *viz.* a willingness to disentangle themselves from the ties of common life, and sacrifice all worldly interests and considerations for the service of their new master, he was found wanting: and this second qualification our Saviour represents as unattainable by a man in the enjoyment of riches, unless his zeal shall be quickened and invigorated by the divine grace, an aid however which we know, from what is recorded in other parts of the New Testament, to be freely promised and liberally imparted to all whose minds are properly disposed to receive it.

There are no other places in the four gospels in which the commandments are particularly mentioned; but perhaps we should look to the epistles, written after it was revealed that the christian covenant extended to others besides the Jews, rather than to our Lord's discourses, for information concerning the abolition or continuance of any part of the Jewish law. There is certainly one passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians, in which the apostle refers to a part of the decalogue in support of a moral precept—"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother (which is the first

commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long upon the earth." There is some difficulty in the interpretation of these words. If the ten commandments were all in full force, that cited above could not be the first with promise; for the second contains both a promise and a threat; and if the language of the second commandment could be explained to be only a general declaration, or an assertion, and not a promise, even then the fifth could not properly be said to be the "first with promise;" for in that case it would be the only one so accompanied; nor can the promise annexed to the performance of the fifth commandment, as set forth in the passages in Exodus and Deuteronomy (the latter of which is not a mere copy of the former, and neither of which is exactly followed by St. Paul), be considered as having reference to any but the Jews, being confined in its terms to the promised land as the place of its fulfilment. The latter part, however, of the second commandment, is declared to be no part of the christian covenant by the prophet Jeremiah in the following words: "In those days they shall say no more 'the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;' but every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall all be set on edge." (See Jeremiah, ch. 31, v. 29, 30.) That the covenant foretold in this place by Jeremiah, and called by him "a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah," and a covenant "not according to the covenant made with their fathers" when they were brought out of the land of Egypt, is the covenant of which Christ is the mediator, is expressly stated in the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, ver. 8, &c.

Perhaps the apostle may mean no more than this, that this commandment was the first of those in the second table (the only ones ever mentioned in the

New Testament), and that it had a promise there; and is rather recommending the duty to parents by a reference to the existing Jewish law, than stating a part of it to be intended to be permanent when that law should generally cease. In another place he says, "Do ye not know that they which minister about the holy things of the temple, and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar?" (1 Cor. ch. 9, v. 13); and yet he was aware at that time that both the altar and the temple would cease to exist in a few years. It is observable, that the fifth commandment is the only one in the second table which is of the same nature and description with those commonly given in the New Testament, being a general affirmative maxim, pointing out a principle or a feeling to be entertained and cultivated, and not a specification of acts to be avoided, which might be satisfied by a literal obedience.

In the 13th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul substitutes one single precept, inculcating a principle of action, for the whole of the second table; "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law; for this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:" and in addition to other places in which he speaks of the Jewish law as abolished without any reservation, in the 3rd chapter of the 2nd Corinthians, in which he is stating the inferiority of the law of Moses, which "was to be done away," when compared with that which "remaineth," he describes the former by a phrase which can be applied with propriety to the decalogue alone, for he calls it the ministration of death, "written and engraven upon stones."

It would not be very easy to distinguish the particular parts of the Jewish law which Bishop Burnet means to represent as binding upon Christians, in addition to the ten commandments, by the words, "all such precepts as belong to them, or are corollaries arising out of them." The description of our duty to our neighbour in the gospel, including habits of self-restraint and active benevolence, is founded on a much more enlarged view of the situation of man upon earth than was ever opened to the Jews ; and the same may be said of our duty to God, but with this additional remark, that three out of the four commandments of the first table seem to be calculated for the people to whom they were delivered, and for no others. The first declares God to be the God of Israel ; the second prohibits the making of images, and the paying an idolatrous worship to them, of which prohibitions the latter only is in force among Christians ; and the fourth, which shall now be considered, is admitted, by most of those even who call the Lord's day the sabbath, not to be binding upon the christian world in its original extent.

In a note on the 14th verse of the 5th chapter of Deuteronomy, in D'Oyley and Mant's Bible, taken from one of Bishop Horsley's sermons, there is the following passage: "To the question, what regard is due to the institution of a sabbath under the christian dispensation? the answer is plainly this: Neither more nor less than was due to it in the patriarchal ages, before the Mosaic covenant took place. It is a gross mistake to consider the sabbath as a mere festival of the Jewish church, deriving its whole sanctity from the Levitical law. The contrary appears, as well from the evidence of the fact which sacred history affords, as from the reason of the thing which the same history declares." But the answer given above to the question there supposed, plainly leads to another question, which is, where the regard

due to a sabbath in the patriarchal ages, to which we are thus referred for the standard of our modern practice, is to be found? there being no trace or hint whatever in the scriptures of the observance of a sabbath previous to the mention of its institution in the 16th chapter of Exodus, after the Israelites were fed with manna in the wilderness. On that occasion an unusual quantity of manna fell from heaven on the sixth day; and none was to be found on the seventh, the Israelites having been directed to gather enough on the sixth to serve for two days. "See," said Moses, "for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place on the seventh day." And the account adds, "So the people rested on the seventh day." The terms in which this transaction is related appear of themselves to imply that the people rested on this day, considered as a sabbath day, for the first time, when this injunction was given; but that fact seems to be established beyond dispute, by the account of their journeys before they reached the wilderness, which shows that they had not rested on the seventh day in the preceding week, for it is stated that they removed from their camp by the Red Sea to the Wilderness of Sin on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from Egypt; the manna fell for the first time on the sixteenth, and the ordinary daily supply continued till the twenty-first, on which day twice the usual quantity came down previous to the rest enjoined to be observed on the twenty-second. It is also a circumstance worthy of remark, as rendering it probable that the Israelites were not accustomed to a sabbath day's rest, that even after the direction given by Moses to abide at home, some of the people went out to seek for manna in the wilderness, although they had witnessed the unusual quantity on the ground the day before, and must have observed, that

what had been kept throughout the night of Friday had not become corrupt, as in the case of that put by on the morning of its first appearance.

Moreover, the purpose for which the sabbath is said in several passages of the Old Testament to have been given to the Israelites, seems to denote that it was not previously in use, nor intended to be so, among the rest of mankind. "Verily," says Moses, speaking by the command of God, and in his name, "my sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between me and you, throughout your generations, that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you." *Exod. xxxi. 16.* And after directing that every man who should do any work on that day should be put to death, Moses adds, "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." In *Ezekiel*, also, God says, "I gave them my sabbaths to be a sign between me and them." And *Nehemiah* mentions, among the benefits conferred by God upon his nation, that "he made known unto them his holy sabbaths." Now it does not seem likely that this knowledge would have been recited as a privilege to the Jews, or that the sabbaths would have been represented by Moses as given for a sign between God and the chosen people, if the observance of them had been a command given to all the inhabitants of the earth from the time of the creation.

Nor is it easy to reconcile with the supposition of such an injunction the two following circumstances: that no such direction should be found, either in the covenant made with Noah after the punishment inflicted by the deluge for turning away from God, or in that with Abraham, by whom the knowledge and worship of the true God were to be preserved; and that no notice should have been taken in the sacred records of the general disobedience throughout the

whole earth of a command, the breach of which by a Jew was so heinous a crime as to subject the offender to the penalty of death.

The single passage in the Bible from which it has been inferred that all mankind were commanded to observe a sabbath is the third verse of the second chapter of Genesis, in which it is said, at the end of the account of the creation, "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that on it he had rested from all his work which he had made;" but it is to be observed, that Moses probably wrote this narrative long after the law was given; and he may naturally enough state, that God entertained at that time the intention of making the seventh day a holy sign between him and his chosen people, and therefore blessed and sanctified it, though the effect of the blessing and sanctification was not to be immediate; as, in the case of Jeremiah, it is said, "Before thou camest out of the womb, I sanctified thee; I ordained thee a prophet among the nations." So St. Paul speaks of himself as "separated from his mother's womb to the office of an apostle," although such separation for this purpose was only ordained by God at St. Paul's birth, and was not to be carried into effect until after he should have been very differently employed. Gal i. 15. Moses does not state that God made any communication to man upon the subject when the work of creation was finished, but may rather be taken to represent the deity as communing with himself, as when he said "Let us make man in our own image;" and the sabbath could not certainly be enjoined at that time as a day of rest from labour, since to labour for his subsistence was a penalty not inflicted upon Adam till after his fall.

If, however, it could be made out that the first race of men observed a stated day of worship, and that they observed it in obedience to a divine command, which is not improbable, though it cannot be inferred

from this passage, it would by no means follow that such command was necessarily to remain in force under a subsequent revelation. To worship God is a moral duty, but in what manner our homage should be paid to him, at what times and seasons, or in what places, and which of God's many works and mercies should be commemorated by days specially set apart to his glory, or by particular observances of any kind, must be matter of positive law, and may be expected to be prescribed, from time to time, by rules varying according to the circumstances in which man may be placed in different ages of the world.

Of those Christians who hold the fourth commandment to be still in force, the Sabbatarians are the only ones who follow up that belief to its true consequence, by thinking it necessary to keep holy the seventh day of the week, either as the only day enjoined by divine authority for the worship of God, or in addition to Sunday, properly called "the Lord's day." It seems, however, to be decisive in disproof of the doctrine of that sect, first, that in those passages of the New Testament in which the Jewish system is said to be abolished, no exception is made in favour of this part of the ceremonial law, though the strict observance of it was constantly insisted upon as the distinguishing mark of God's people previous to that time; and secondly, that St. Paul has affirmed the abolition of this particular institution in plain terms, saying, "Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holiday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days, which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ." Coloss. ii. 16, 17. There is also a passage in the Epistle to the Romans, chap. xiv. ver. 5, from which it appears that the distinction made by the Jewish law between the sabbath and other days, was no longer to remain in force: "one man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike, let every man be fully

persuaded in his own mind, *i. e.* fully enjoy his own sentiments, and act accordingly. In the next verse the apostle puts the observance of particular days and the practice of abstaining from particular meats upon the same footing, as things in themselves indifferent, which he could not have done, if the fourth commandment had been in force even among the Jews. And it is therefore evident that whatever festivals or fasts are now to be observed by Christians must be regulated by the authority committed to the rulers of the Church, and are not to be sought in any command given in the law of Moses.

Such other Christians as maintain that the fourth commandment is not abrogated, allege, in support of their opinion, first, that the essence of the commandment is the appropriation of one day in seven to God's service, the particular day chosen for that purpose being, as they hold, of little importance; and, secondly, that a change took place in respect to the day on which the commandment was to be observed when christianity was introduced, our Saviour himself having first relaxed the strictness of the Jewish sabbath, and his apostles having subsequently transferred the worship of God from Saturday to Sunday, in honour of their Lord's resurrection; but the former of these positions gives an interpretation of the commandment altogether unwarranted by any authority or analogy to be discovered in the sacred writings, and the latter has no foundation in fact.

From what part of the Bible have we learned that either the time, or the place, or the manner of worshipping God under a commandment, which contains any specific direction upon these points, may be considered as immaterial? While the Jewish law was in force, it was not indifferent, whether sacrifices were offered on Mount Sinai or on Mount Gerizim, by priests of the sons of Levi, or by other persons; nor, if the commandment by which God directed the

sabbath to be kept holy in his honour be still unrepealed, can we be justified in treating that day as common which he has hallowed, and in imagining that an injunction to pay him worship on the seventh day of the week can be satisfied by any homage which can be offered on the first.

It is a mistake to suppose that our Lord relaxed the strictness of the sabbath in his life-time, or that the apostles changed the day on which it was observed after his resurrection. The conduct of Christ on the sabbath day was called in question by the scribes and pharisees on several occasions on which he healed diseases miraculously ; in one instance, when his disciples had plucked some ears of corn, and in another, when the impotent man, made whole at the pool of Bethesda, took up his bed and carried it away ; the former of which they charged upon our Lord as having been countenanced by him, and the latter of which was done by his express direction. In regard to the cures performed, he showed that they could not be considered in any respect as violations of the sabbath, and he upbraided his accusers with their inconsistency in endeavouring to represent them in that light, when they could not but be conscious that they would think themselves at liberty to use such exertions on that day as might be necessary to rescue from destruction the ox or the ass who should have fallen into the pit. In answer to the other accusations, he reminds his hearers that the prohibitions of the law were not so construed as to prevent the service of the temple ; that they might be dispensed with in cases of an extraordinary nature, like that of David when he eat the shewbread, and could not limit nor restrain the operations of God himself ; and in the case of the removal of the bed, in particular, which was an open breach of the fourth commandment, and which he probably directed, that he might take occasion, from what passed upon it, to make

manifest the extent of his authority, he does not merely state, as in the instance of the disciples plucking the ears of corn, that the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath, but declares his participation in the divine nature, and identifies himself with God, saying, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work;" (John, ch: 5, v. 17) but so far was his conduct or language upon these occasions from authorizing the Jews to relax in the observance of the sabbath enjoined by Moses, that the whole course of his argument requires that his acts, or those which he had sanctioned, should be viewed in contrast with such as would be lawful in common persons, or on ordinary occasions, instead of being taken as examples for general imitation.

It is well known, that the custom of meeting together on the first day of the week, for the purpose of religious worship, has prevailed in the christian churches up to the present time from the day of the resurrection, in the evening of which our Lord stood in the midst of the apostles, where they were assembled with closed doors for fear of the Jews. Whether this usage of meeting together on a Sunday to offer prayer and praise to God took its rise among Christians from any specific directions, or was practised by the apostles, and then adopted by their converts after their example, is not mentioned in the sacred writings; nor does it appear there, whether any other business connected with the duties imposed on the brethren by their new religion, except that of bringing together the alms collected for such among them as were in need of charity, was transacted upon such occasions; but the meetings themselves are referred to, as held on that day, in several parts of the New Testament; and the disuse of them is supposed to be censured in that passage of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which we are exhorted not to "forsake the assembling ourselves together, as the custom of some is." It is however, equally notorious

that the sabbath day did not cease to be observed under the fourth commandment, as soon as the christian festival was instituted, nor for a considerable time afterwards; on the contrary, it still retained its ancient name, the day on which the worship of the Christians was solemnized continuing to be called Sunday by the gentiles, and being invariably designated, among the Christians themselves, by the appellation of the Lord's day. It is, indeed, impossible that the latter could have been substituted for the former, since it was not known, till some time after the commencement of the christian worship, that the law of Moses was to be abolished; and the apostles themselves, as well as other Jewish Christians, certainly observed both days until after the fall of Jerusalem, if they did not continue the observance of the sabbath long subsequent to that event.

It was about eighteen years after the first day of the week had been appropriated to the worship of God under the christian dispensation, when the apostolic decree was sent down from Jerusalem by the hands of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, for the purpose of proclaiming to the people of those parts the terms on which they were to be admitted to the covenant of Christ. It was recognised at the meeting, in which the decree was framed, that Moses had then, in all the cities of that part of Asia, "them that preached him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day;" and the decree was partly founded on the expediency of not giving offence to the new converts among the Jews. It left the Christians of those days at full liberty upon the subject of the sabbath. It neither prohibited the Jews from keeping it, nor imposed the observance of it upon the gentiles; but it is not possible to reconcile the silence of the decree upon this point, with the supposition that the fourth commandment was to constitute the basis of the christian worship.

The distinguishing character of that commandment is not that God should be worshipped on the seventh day, for he was to be worshipped by the nation to whom the commandment was given, on other days also, but an injunction that man, with the beasts that serve him, should rest from labour upon that day. This was a practice which had never formed a part of the worship of any people on the earth, except the Jews, and was quite new to the gentile world; and the exclusion of all reference to it from the instruction given in the apostolic decree amounts to a plain proof that it was not then required from those for whose use that decree was framed.

There is also a very important piece of evidence furnished by profane history, to show that the first Christians did not observe Sunday under the fourth commandment, in the letter written to the Emperor Trajan by Pliny the younger, when governor of Pontus and Bithynia, about the year of our Lord 107, between thirty and forty years after the destruction of Jerusalem. As the object of that letter was to request the emperor's instructions, as to the course to be taken with those who professed the new religion, Pliny communicates in the first instance whatever he could collect by diligent inquiry concerning the peculiarities of christianity and the mode of christian worship. He says, that the Christians meet on a stated day, and sing a hymn to Christ as to a God, and bind themselves by an oath to abstain from certain wicked acts, after which they separate; and he adds, that it had been their custom to come together again to a meal (the ancient love-feast), which practice, however, had been discontinued after the publication of the emperor's edict concerning public assemblies, to which Trajan had a great dislike. The above is stated by Pliny as the whole of what he had been able to discover; and he appears to have been so anxious to find out all that could be learned

respecting the Christians, that, not confining himself to other means of procuring information, he actually examined two christian females, who were deaconesses, by torture, lest any of the practical effects of the new religion, which he viewed with a very unfavourable eye, as having materially interfered with the national worship of the empire, should remain concealed from him. It is therefore evident, that in those days the Christians did not think themselves bound by any commandment to observe the Sunday as a sabbath, in the extensive province over which Pliny presided; nor does it appear to have been made a day of rest from the business and occupations of common life, in other parts, by any except the Jewish converts, till the reign of Constantine, when christianity became the national religion of the empire.

Upon the whole, the true state of the case appears to be well expressed by Archdeacon Paley in the following passage:—

“The assembling upon the first day of the week for the purpose of public worship and religious instruction is a law of christianity of divine appointment. The resting on that day from our employments longer than we are detained from them by our attendance on these assemblies is to Christians an ordinance of human institution, binding, nevertheless, upon the conscience of every individual of a country in which a weekly sabbath is established, for the sake of the beneficial purposes which the public and regular observance of it promotes; and recommended, perhaps, in some degree to the divine approbation, by the resemblance it bears to what God was pleased to make a solemn part of the law which he delivered to the people of Israel, and by its subserviency to many of the same uses.” Paley’s *Moral Philosophy*, vol. 2, page 91.

There are, however, some persons who are unwilling to come to a fair consideration of this subject,

although they do not profess to see on what ground Sunday has any claim to be called the sabbath, or how it derives any part of its holiness from the fourth commandment. Having a strong conviction of the importance of separating Sunday from other days to the service of religion, and justly attributing the escape of Great Britain from the infidel principles and erroneous notions which operated so mischievously on the continent of Europe during the French revolution to the degree of respect paid to the Lord's day in this country, they cannot make up their minds to listen to any arguments which they think likely to weaken the reverence entertained for Sunday among the people ; and will even admit in private that they feel more inclined to countenance, than to remove, an error which, in their judgment, tends to good rather than to evil.

But surely to take this course is not to act in the spirit of the gospel. We blame the heathen sages of antiquity for making expediency rather than truth the object of their search, and we charge it as a grievous fault upon the Church of Rome, that she upholds the belief of miracles of which she produces no proof, invests her priesthood with power and authority which do not belong to it, and teaches for revelation doctrines which are not to be found in the scriptures, clinging to the practices of those dark times when the clergy thought it not only allowable but praiseworthy to endeavour to strengthen the cause of truth by imposture, and extend the kingdom of God by what were styled " pious frauds." The line of conduct above described comes too near this unhallowed mode of supporting religion, and savours too much of human policy, to be agreeable to the divine will. We have the promise of our Lord himself for the stability of his church, and we are neither called upon nor authorized to borrow the craft of this world for its protection.

Nor is it easy to foresee to how many false doctrines

or inconsistencies perseverance in a single error may give birth. The practice of referring to the fourth commandment, as the authority for our Sunday worship, not only misleads Christians as to the manner in which our homage to God should be paid, but it keeps altogether out of sight the great event which we meet to commemorate, and tends to make the redemption of man occupy a much less prominent part in his contemplation than it ought to do, compared with his creation. It directs the attention of mankind to the covenant made through Moses, rather than to the gospel, and confirms those persons in their error who, instead of looking upon the law as a temporary and imperfect rule of action, as a schoolmaster and a guide to bring the Jews to Christ, see little more in Christ himself than a teacher and expounder of the law.

Men of plain understandings are sometimes puzzled and perplexed, instead of being enlightened, when, having been taught to repeat the fourth commandment as it now stands in the Church Catechism, without comment or explanation, they discover that the day which they are accustomed to keep holy is not the seventh day, and was not separated from the remainder of the week in memory of the day on which God rested, and find, moreover, that they are not keeping any day holy according to the injunctions which were conveyed by the commandment to the people to whom it was addressed. Even with regard to the latter point, it must be confessed to be rather a questionable policy (if policy it is to be considered) to teach men a commandment as the foundation of their religious worship which is not to be obeyed, either as originally observed, or according to its obvious import. Now, besides those acts in which a departure from the commandment is tacitly tolerated or connived at in this country, there are many sanctioned by the law of the land which, if the commandment were still in force,

no human legislature could have authority to allow, for it would be subversive of all obedience to the will of heaven to hold that a divine injunction concerning the homage to be paid to God could be dispensed with, upon ordinary occasions, for the convenience of man. The utmost latitude that could be allowed in any fair construction of the commandment to keep holy the sabbath day, as expressed in the decalogue, would be, that it should not operate to prevent man from labouring in cases of extraordinary emergency, or in works of charity or mercy, or in travelling for the purpose of attending divine worship. But how would crying and carrying milk and mackerel through the streets come within these exceptions to the divine command? or the conveyance of fish from one part of the country to the other in carts, or of letters by the public post? or how indeed are the reasons, which may warrant man in using his own exertions on the sabbath, to extend to the beasts in his service, if it has pleased their Creator to give them the privilege of rest on that day by a positive law?

We know that from the time of the first christian emperor, Constantine, the state has taken upon itself, in most countries, to regulate the distinction to be observed between Sunday and the other six days of the week, in regard to business or amusement, it being doubtful whether Christians were in the habit, before his reign, of abstaining from the common occupations of life during that day for a longer period than was required for their attendance on divine worship. If we are still bound to observe the sabbath under the fourth commandment, the exercise of that power by the state is an usurpation; but if the contrary supposition, upon which all christian governments appear to have acted, be the correct one, the more generally the truth is known the better; for the reverence of the people for the sabbath is not fixed upon a very solid

foundation, when they are encouraged to take a different view of the subject from that which is acted upon by their rulers, or when they learn one thing in their Catechism and another from the law of the land.

It must be admitted that the most eminent writers have been divided in their sentiments upon this point; and to whichever opinion any person who may enter upon the consideration of it shall incline, he will have the satisfaction of finding many wise and good men of the same way of thinking with himself, while he will see a sufficient number of pious and learned persons ranged on the opposite side of the question, to warn him against being over confident that he may not himself be among those who are in error, and to show him the propriety of not treating those, from whom he may differ with asperity and contempt.

In a letter lately addressed by the Bishop of London (Dr. Blomfield) to the inhabitants of London and Westminster, his lordship, although he does not admit that the fourth commandment has ceased to be in force, has accommodated his arguments and exhortations concerning the observance of Sunday to the supposition of its being observed under an ordinance of the christian church, rather than as a remnant of the Jewish law.

In his appendix, the bishop says " 'The Lord's day' is a more correct and more christian appellation of the first day of the week than the 'Sabbath.' So far were the early Christians from terming it the sabbath, that many of them kept holy both the Lord's day and the sabbath, yet the Lord's day may now with propriety be termed the christian sabbath."

It is the use of this term "sabbath" which has introduced much of the confusion and uncertainty that prevail in the reasonings upon this subject. In the early part of his letter the bishop says, "In the observations which I am about to make, I shall take

for granted the necessity of a sabbatical institution; and for argument's sake I might be content to place its authority upon the basis of expediency, although, for my own part, I think that it is entitled to our respect upon far higher and more sacred grounds than this. But admitting only that it is necessary to keep alive a sense of religion in any people, we may safely assume that this cannot possibly be done without the observance of a sabbath."

If by "a sabbatical institution," and "a sabbath," be meant a day of rest, similar to that observed among the Jews, the position here stated is so far from being matter of assumption, or self-evident, that it seems at variance with the whole history of the rise and progress of christianity previous to the reign of Constantine; for it could not be in the power of those, who embraced the new religion during that period, to abstain generally from all secular occupations during the first day of the week, although they certainly felt it to be their duty to assemble themselves together, under all difficulties, and at all hazards, upon that day, for the purpose of uniting in congregational worship. Among the Jews a strict obedience to the commandment which enjoined abstinence from work was facilitated by the mode in which they were miraculously supplied with manna in the wilderness, and by other circumstances connected with the government and situation of God's peculiar people; but the manner in which that portion of the day, which was not spent in worshipping God, was employed by the first churches or communities of Christians, must have varied according to times and circumstances, depending necessarily, in a great degree, on the state and condition of christianity in particular places, as the predominant religion, or only tolerated, or under persecution. And it is evidently owing to the obstacles through which the gospel had to make its way on its first promulga-

tion, that the early ages of the christian era furnish us with no general rules or examples for the observance of the Lord's day in modern times.

When Sunday is termed "the Christian Sabbath," it must surely be so called as being separated from the other six days of the week, to be dedicated to the honour of God among Christians, as the sabbath was among the Jews, rather than from any other resemblance which it bears to that day: the event which we principally commemorate, not being the creation of man, but his redemption—not the circumstance of God's resting from his works, but the resurrection of his Son from the grave, as must be evident from the day selected, as well as from the form of worship described by Pliny to have been in use among the first Christians, *viz.* a "hymn sung to Christ as to a God"; and if the memory of the creation entered at all into the reasons for praising God on that day, rather than on any other, it must have been the commencement, and not the termination, of the week which was then celebrated.

To the clergy, Sunday, instead of being a day of rest or ease, must always be the busiest day in the week, a period of particular activity and exertion in their sacred calling. By those among the laity who are in the possession of the good things of this world without toil and trouble on their part, that portion of the Lord's day, which is not required for public or private worship, will be best occupied, when it is so employed as to keep alive their sense of gratitude to heaven for the blessings they enjoy, and promote mutual benevolence between them and their neighbours of all ranks and degrees; while to such as are engaged in the active employments of life, and more especially to those of the lower classes, who are destined to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, as to so much of it as may not be wanted for devotional purposes, or for instruction, it should be

made a day of ease and recreation, and of as much amusement as can be afforded to them without ministering occasions of sin.

The proper application of these principles to the pursuits of men in an advanced stage of society, in a country where wealth and prosperity have engendered habits of luxury, and are constantly introducing new fashions and modes of life, and in which a large proportion of the community have contracted a disposition to think for themselves, must always be difficult and perplexing; and it cannot but happen, that frequent differences of opinion should arise upon matters connected with this subject, even among those who are the most sincerely desirous of acting correctly. On some points the legislature has spoken in the Statute Book, and in others custom has assumed the place of law, but after all that these monitors can prescribe, the manner in which individuals shall employ themselves upon this day must be oftener regulated by their own feelings and judgment, on a view of the circumstances under which they respectively stand in the complicated relations of social life, than by any positive rule or direction.

The Statute Book has said (for the common law is silent upon the subject) that all the ordinary business of life shall cease during the Lord's day; that no tradesman or artificer, workman or labourer, shall do or exercise any worldly labour or work in his calling on that day, except works of necessity or charity); and that no wares or merchandizes of any kind shall be cried or exposed to sale on that day. But to this regulation there are various exceptions for the sake of public convenience; meat may be dressed at inns for travellers; milk and mackerel may be cried; bakers may use their ovens at certain hours; hackney coaches are allowed in the metropolis; and a limited number of watermen may ply on the river Thames.

On this day courts of justice are shut, and all civil process is suspended, and all places of amusement, opened for money, incur the penalty of being disorderly houses. With entertainments at private houses, the legislature cannot properly interfere; but custom has prohibited generally card parties, balls, concerts, and all the larger assemblies for purposes of amusement, which can hardly be made matter of legislation, but which call forth too much excitement, and savour too much of levity, ostentation, and the thirst of human applause, rather than of pure benevolence, to be suitable to the considerate reflection and sobriety of demeanor which ought to mark the behaviour of the higher orders of society upon that day.

The bishop's letter, however, after censuring very justly some glaring violations of decency on the Lord's day, appears to place upon the same footing meetings of very different descriptions. "With respect to these Sunday evening card parties," says his lordship, "I confess I do not see much difference between them and what are called *conversazioni*, the object of which, whatever it may be, is not a religious object, and therefore has no reference to the proper business of the day." He then condemns such of those meetings, even, "as may be for the purposes of scientific conference and discussion," stating that "work and employment of the Lord's day ought to be throughout of a directly and decidedly religious character."

Such certainly were not the notions entertained by some who were deemed orthodox members of the Church of England at the close of the last century. The writer of these observations often accompanied his father, about forty years ago, to the house of one of the most eminent men of his time for learning and piety, who was in the habit of receiving a few friends on a Sunday evening at one of those meetings above described, where he saw persons whose lives as

well as religious opinions he was taught in early life to respect, and who would now be much surprised, if they were not shielded from the bishop's censure by the tomb, to find themselves classed with the frequenters of Sunday card parties, and stigmatised as differing but little from the living reprobates who are represented as beyond the reach of his lordship's admonition. In those days the levees held by the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker of the House of Commons often took place on a Sunday evening, being more frequent than they are at present. Our late excellent sovereign, George the Third, whose memory will be dear to Englishmen as long as piety and virtue shall continue to command the regards of men in this country, walked every Sunday evening, for many years before his blindness, among his people, upon the terrace of Windsor, with a band of music playing at one end of it, and received with pleasure the attentions of his nobles and such other persons of distinction as had the honour of being personally known to him (generally the most pious of their rank), who came to Windsor to pay their duty to their sovereign, and neither he nor they believed that the sanctity of the Lord's day was profaned, or any guilt whatever incurred, by this proceeding. During the same reign the royal gardens at Richmond were open on every Sunday for the accommodation of the public; and thousands, high and low, felt grateful for the enjoyment they derived from walking there.

It will be said, perhaps, that whenever the higher orders meet under circumstances which call for the use of their carriages, however the masters may be employed, the conversation of the servants, who are waiting for them, is not likely to tend to edification: but this inconvenience is much the same whether the carriage be used, on such occasions as are above alluded to, or in the conveyance of the family to and from church, for it is not to be supposed that the

attendants on the long line of carriages which may sometimes be seen waiting at St. James's church for the conclusion of the bishop's sermon, employ themselves in discussing points of theology while they remain there. All considerate masters will so make their arrangements for their own attendance at church, or at any other meeting, as to allow every part of their families opportunities of being sometimes present at public worship, and of sometimes passing a portion of the Lord's day quietly at home. And it may admit of some doubt, whether they who walk to and from church, that their servants may attend divine service, and afterwards drive out for an hour or two in Hyde Park, may not evince quite as much regard for the spiritual welfare of that portion of their family, and consult their improvement as effectually, as the more orthodox persons who use their carriages in their attendance at church without scruple, and then take their own exercise on foot.

The bishop's observations upon the degree of hospitality which may be innocently exercised on Sunday, are not very distinctly stated. Condemning "Sunday dinner parties" under the general term, his lordship speaks with some hesitation concerning "the ancient and customary hospitality of entertaining those who attend divine service in their official capacity," expressions which allude, apparently, to the common practice of the clergyman's dining occasionally in country places with the squire. But surely a much wider range ought to be given to hospitality on this day than is here grudgingly permitted. How is the honour of God invaded, or what principle or feeling of religion is violated, by those who spread their table on the Lord's day for such of the junior branches of their families as may be separated from them by business during the rest of the week, or even for such of their neighbours as are too much engaged in the active pursuits of the world to be able to meet

them on other days at the social board? The Sunday dinner is not a Jewish passover, to be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, standing, and in haste, but a christian meal, to be received, like all other blessings vouchsafed on that day (a day, be it remembered, which has always been considered by the church as a festival and not a fast) with joy and thankfulness; and why may not Christians be brought together to partake of it, provided they are not assembled in such numbers, and under such circumstances, as should lead to tumultuous gaiety, or intemperance, or to the consumption of more time at the dinner-table than is consistent with the other duties of the day? According to the view of the subject here taken, it would not be practicable to lay down precise rules or regulations respecting Sunday dinner parties; but it is easy to state the principles upon which the guests should be invited or entertained, *viz.* not for the purpose of displaying the wealth or magnificence of their host, nor to exchange the train of thoughts suited to the day for levity and dissipation, but to keep alive the spirit of benevolence—to knit more closely the ties of blood or friendship—and in short to improve the dispositions of men to perform those good offices to each other which constitute our duty to our neighbour, as standing in the same relation to the object of our worship with ourselves, and sharing in the same benefits.

There can be no doubt of its being desirable to prevent the practice of travelling on a Sunday from being carried to the unwarrantable extent described in the bishop's letter; but it would be difficult to devise any legislative provision or lay down any positive rule upon that subject, which would not be liable to much objection. To interfere with the use of private carriages and horses would be attended with the greatest possible degree of trouble and inconvenience; and if the owners of private equipages are left to judge

of the occasions upon which they are to be employed, it would justly be deemed an act of oppression to subject those who might wish to avail themselves of such modes of public conveyance as may be hired to a scrutiny in regard to their reasons for moving from one place to another; while to say generally that no person should travel post on a Sunday, would be to throw an impediment in many cases in the way of works of charity or necessity. The prohibition of stage coaches on Sunday, while public convenience requires that the mail should be carried on that day, could hardly be made to rest on any tenable ground: and indeed if what are denominated the "short stages," or such conveyances as the steam-boat to Richmond, &c. could be confined in their operations to hours preceding or following the common hours of divine service, it may be doubted, whether any very valid reason can be found for depriving the middling ranks of society of the accommodation they afford.

To the lower orders, the Lord's day should undoubtedly be a season of recreation, a respite from fatigue, a period of relaxation from their daily cares, and of refreshment from the toil and turmoil of the rest of the week, a day on which the husbandman should neither plough nor sow, nor the mechanic ply his craft, nor the tradesman stand behind his counter; but surely it is not necessary that when the primary duties of public worship shall have been performed, they should sit at home with folded arms for the remainder of the day; nor, whatever degree of cultivation may eventually be bestowed on the intellects of the poorer classes of the community, can it be supposed that they will ever be in a condition to spend the whole of Sunday in pious meditation, or in reading the Bible? Nor indeed is it to be wished that the whole of the day should be so employed, for there are thousands, particularly in this metropolis, who have no opportunity on any other day of taking that exercise

which is essential to the health both of body and mind, or of escaping for a few hours from their ordinary abode into purer air. Instead of shutting the people out of the king's parks on a Sunday, or urging them to refrain from making excursions to the outskirts of the town, we should rejoice to see them there. The artisan who devotes a portion of the day to religious exercises, but takes his Sunday walk after church with his wife hanging on one arm, while he carries or leads his child with the other, may sleep as soundly and with as safe a conscience, at the end of the day, as he who sat the whole evening with his Bible open before him, reading it for a part of the time and slumbering over it during the remainder.

The question of sports and games on a Sunday is of more difficult solution, as depending mainly on circumstances, for it cannot be said that they are prohibited on that day, either by the law of the land, or by any generally received ordinance of the church.

The 1 Car. I. cap. 4, prohibits all meetings, assemblies, or concourse of people out of their own parishes on the Lord's day, "for any sports or pastimes whatsoever" and forbids all bear-baiting, bull-baiting, and other unlawful exercises or pastimes within their own parishes, impliedly allowing, as Blackstone observes, "innocent recreations in the respective parishes after divine service is over:" and the act is founded upon a principle which is very intelligible (although it may be one upon which it is not easy to form a practical regulation), since the same diversion which may be innocent, or even attended with beneficial effects, if conducted on a limited scale, and operating upon minds properly disposed, may produce much evil under different circumstances. The same wine, which in moderate quantities makes glad the heart of man, deprives him of his reason, if taken to excess; and the sun itself, which dispenses health and strength to

living bodies, breeds nothing but corruption and decay in such as are dead.

Perhaps, in distant parts of the country, where the population is not crowded, some sports might safely be allowed, especially among the young, as affording a better mode of passing time than the ale-house or even the reading-room and the newspaper: but wherever the meeting for such purposes leads to bad consequences it should at once be prohibited, or discouraged even though not falling within the letter of the law. So much inconvenience has in fact been found to result from places of public entertainment, that the legislature has been induced to give the character of "disorderly" to all places of public amusement or debating opened upon any part of the Lord's day to which admittance shall be had for money, or tickets sold for money, or by charging any extraordinary price for refreshment. See 21 Geo. III. cap. 49.

The conclusion to be drawn from this view of the subject seems to be, that instead of treating the Lord's day as a sabbath, instituted under the fourth commandment, we should inculcate the observance of it upon christian principles, as a day on which we commemorate an event of much more importance to us than the creation of this perishable world, and on which we assemble ourselves together, not only to praise God for that event, but to pray to him for his grace to enable us to reap the benefit of it; not merely looking back to the resurrection of Christ, but carrying our views forward to our own resurrection as connected with it.

We should see our way more clearly through the difficulties which present themselves, in regard to the proper mode of passing the Lord's day, if we were taught affirmatively from our catechisms the duties to be performed on that day, instead of being merely told that we must not do any work on it. The cate-

chumen is informed that he is to keep the sabbath day (by which he is to understand the Lord's day) "holy," but the only explanation afforded to him of what is meant by the term "holy" is, that he is to abstain from work, while no notice whatever is taken to him of the main duty of the day—*viz.* the attendance upon divine service in church, for the purpose of recognising publicly our covenant with God, of listening to the exhortation and instruction of the ministers of Christ, and of occasionally partaking of the sacrament which he has ordained.

In this country, as in all those in which christianity has become the established religion, the law has directed the ordinary business of life to be suspended on the Lord's day, partly to mark a distinction between that day and the rest of the week, partly to allow opportunities for the exercise and cultivation of religious feelings, and partly for ease and refreshment to those who are immersed at other times in worldly affairs. It is hardly possible to define exactly the degree of strictness with which this suspension of our ordinary concerns should be observed by persons in different situations; the rule itself, however, which forbids work does not extend generally to amusement, and upon this latter head the conduct of individuals must necessarily be left in most cases to be determined by their own judgments or consciences, the same practices being, in many instances, either free from blame or censurable according to the circumstances and situation of the parties concerned in them; for, to say with the Bishop of London, that "the work and employment of the Lord's day ought to be throughout of a *directly* and *decidedly* religious character" is to put a yoke round the necks of Christians which the gospel has not placed there, and which the bulk of mankind would be unable to bear. Of the multitudes to whom his lordship's letter alludes, as passing along the Thames in boats on a Sunday evening, or fre-

quenting the tea gardens in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, many have no other opportunity of recreation during the week, while some might probably select a fitter season on some other day for their exercise or amusements.

It is much to be lamented that the differences of opinion which prevail respecting Sunday amongst those who are really desirous of conforming to the divine will, should be such as to render it very difficult to prevent by positive law even those abuses of the day which all must be anxious to see repressed; but that difficulty is much increased by the existence amongst us of a numerous body of persons, who, going far beyond the right reverend prelate cited above, would not consider any rules concerning the observance of the Lord's day worth having, which did not turn it, as far as it regards the bulk of the people, from a festival into a fast, in which light it was certainly never considered by the primitive Christians. Nor is this the only inconvenience arising to us from the prevalence in this country of a class of persons whose favourite preachers are styled, sometimes by themselves and sometimes by their hearers, "evangelical," as if they were entitled to be distinguished from all other ministers of the Church of England by that appellation, which certainly imputes to their brethren that they do not preach the gospel of Christ.

The followers of these preachers, who, however, take upon them not unfrequently to be teachers and preachers themselves, are not satisfied with a pharisaical observance of Sunday, but profess to abstain from many of the diversions of common life on other days, interdicting, as sinful, cards, balls, public concerts, plays, operas, and in general all large meetings assembled for the purposes of amusement.

It is no trifling inconvenience, in some parts of this country, that families of rank and opulence should withdraw themselves from such social meetings in

their neighbourhood as not only produce cheerfulness and gaiety while they last, but are calculated to bring the nobility and gentry of each county or district acquainted with each other, and to create a general feeling of good-will and kindness among those who attend them; but the evil is much increased when they, who thus keep aloof from such meetings, take upon them to judge their neighbours for practices which are only wrong when indulged in to excess, while they allow themselves to relax in the ordinary civilities and courtesies of life towards those who ought, according to the common usages of the world, to form a part of their society, and think they make up for the neglect of their duties towards the gentry and clergy of their neighbourhood by an interference of a very questionable character with those who are much further removed from them and do not come under their personal observation.

Individuals, whose influence or example might be of much service to religion if they would let their "light shine before men" in their proper sphere, are mistaken if they suppose that the best way to teach the lower classes of the community "to do their duty in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call them," is to fill our kitchens and cottages with Calvinistic tracts, circulated by emissaries who encourage our domestic servants and labourers to sit in judgment on the behaviour of their masters in matters which do not come within the range of their understanding or knowledge; and this is done, not only where the people may be supposed to be in want of a guide, but in parishes and places where the clergyman is assiduous in the discharge of his duties, and without any attempt to act in conjunction with him or with the heads of families. Nor is this revived spirit of puritanism harmless in its effects upon youth and inexperience, even in the upper classes, especially among females. To persuade a young wife that she is

guilty of an offence against God if she accompany her husband to a ball-room, or a public concert, and to teach the daughters of a family in the higher walks of life to look upon their parents as reprobates because they sit down to a game at picquet, or even make up a party at whist, is to sow the seeds of domestic unhappiness instead of promoting conjugal affection or filial obedience; and these cases are not imaginary. It is true that the first Christians were never seen at the theatre, or the circus, because the representations exhibited at these places among the pagans were in general idolatrous, or sanguinary, or offensive to decency and good manners, and not unfrequently such as to be avoided on all those grounds at the same time; but there is no scriptural authority for saying that the attendance on theatrical performances is inconsistent with any christian obligation, provided they are not objectionable in any of the particulars stated above, and are not permitted to engross too much of our time and attention.

Whenever pleasure is so eagerly followed as to lead us to forget God, it becomes sinful; but so long as it only calls for cheerfulness and gratitude to Providence in those by whom it is experienced, the pursuit of it seems not only innocent but commendable. It is to be hoped that many feel thankful for the enjoyments of this life in a playhouse or an assembly-room, while there are those, who spend hours in the contemplation of the stupendous works of nature, without thinking of their author.

Among the most vehement declaimers against public amusements will be found persons who have been carried far down the stream of dissipation at their first outset in life; and they may be right in avoiding altogether the scenes of their former vices and follies: but the same abstinence may not be required from those who have not the same recollections to encounter. If a luxurious man should have indulged

his appetite for food until his stomach has lost its tone, and he is advised, owing to the state of his digestive organs, to lay aside the use of meat and wine, he will act prudently in so doing; but he is not in a condition to take credit to himself for his temperance, nor warranted in pressing the necessity of the same course of discipline on the rest of the world.

The favourers of these evangelical doctrines profess in general very exaggerated notions of the worthlessness and utter depravity of mankind, founding their notions upon the literal meaning of some strong expressions in St. Paul's epistles, but when our Lord commanded the little children to be brought to him, and said, "that of such was the kingdom of heaven,"* he did not represent the mind of man as having no qualities in it, even in its natural state, that were pleasing to God; and St. Paul never speaks of Christians collectively in opprobrious terms, nor does the scorn and apparent abhorrence which some modern preachers appear to feel for every thing human seem to be a very fit preparative for that affectionate regard and love for our brethren which it has pleased God to make the root and spring of our duties towards our neighbour.

Among the practices at which the mistaken piety of some of these persons has lately taken offence is the performance of sacred music in a cathedral for a charitable purpose. For more than an hundred years the three choirs of Gloucester, Hereford, and Worcester, have been accustomed to join annually in a festival of this description, held in each of the three cathedrals in its turn. The festival lasts for three days—on the first, the cathedral service only is performed with such music as properly belongs to it, and there is a sermon—on the second, there is no church service,

but the music is all sacred, there being no intermixture of sacred and profane compositions, as is commonly the case where selections are made for musical performances in ordinary concert-rooms, a practice leading to transitions from grave to gay not always very decorous—on the third day the performance consists solely of the sacred oratorio of the Messiah. The admission on the two latter days is by purchased tickets, but on each of the three days a collection is made for the benefit of the fund mentioned above.

The reasons for which these proceedings can be thought objectionable in a church are not very obvious. In the opinion of some amongst us the sight of the most distinguished inhabitants in the county for rank and opulence, assembled in the cathedral as branches of one great christian family, in that spirit of mutual good-will which their concurrence in a benevolent design is calculated to produce, for the avowed purpose of acknowledging the great duty of charity in the days of their prosperity, presents one of the most pleasing spectacles to God and man which this earth can afford. Men may go thither merely in search of amusement or from other worldly motives (and the motives of our best actions are seldom free from some mixture of human alloy), but if any one comes out of the cathedral, after assisting at this ceremony, without being the better for it, the fault is surely in the individual and not in the meeting.

When God was pleased, himself, to form a ritual for his chosen people, he did not disdain to call into his service the skill of the artificer, or the instruments of the minstrel and the voices of the singers; and when on the bringing up of the ark from Obed Edom David put off the royal robes and became an actor in the religious rejoicings that accompanied it on its journey, the cheerful gratitude of the king was vindicated from the heartless censure of his haughty consort, who deemed the sovereign degraded by the

part he took on that occasion, and attributed his conduct to an unworthy affectation of popularity and the love of human applause, for which presumptuous and uncandid judgment she was deservedly punished.

The rejoicings at the music-meeting above described should be considered as partaking largely of a religious character; and we may hope that neither the clergymen who join in superintending the arrangements connected with the festival, as stewards, nor the bishop who is accustomed to entertain the principal singers at his palace, nor such of the nobility and gentry as stand at the gates of the cathedral to solicit alms for the orphans of the church, are guilty of any indecorum in the sight of heaven, and that God will not hold his house dishonoured by being opened to those who are engaged in one of those works of mercy which he will then, and then only, accept as sacrifice, when they are done in his name.

NOTE XII.

ON THE OFFENCES OF THE ISRAELITES.

ALTHOUGH it cannot be denied that the offences of the children of Israel were flagrant and numerous from the first appearance of Moses among them as their leader, they are much misrepresented, when it is inferred from their frequent idolatries and transgressions that they were unconvinced of the miraculous nature of the events of which they were eye witnesses in the early part of their history, from which supposed want of conviction upon their part a question has been sometimes raised, or a doubt insinuated, concerning the reality of the miracles recorded in the sacred narrative.

The historian of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" (a work to be read with much distrust on points connected with sacred history, since, although it never speaks in direct terms of the scriptures otherwise than as acknowledging their claims to implicit credit, it contrives nevertheless, incidentally, to give such a colour to particular facts related in them as may be calculated to create doubts of their authenticity,) describes the contemporaries of Moses and Joshua as beholding with careless indifference "the miracles wrought on their behalf,"* and professes to be surprised at what he calls "their stubborn incredulity when the law was given in thunder from Mount Sinai, and the tides of the ocean and the courses of the planets were suspended for their convenience;"† but surely Mr. Gibbon is guilty on this occasion of great misrepresentation; for, although the Israelites repeatedly provoked God by their idolatrous practices, they never denied that his arm had been stretched forth on their behalf, nor did they when they transgressed the law dispute its divine origin. We may learn among Christians, without going back to the Jewish history for that purpose, that it is one thing to disobey and another to disbelieve. It is evident that the image of the golden calf made by Aaron in the wilderness was intended as a symbol of the true God, for Aaron proclaimed a feast to Jehovah to be held on the day after it was set up; and this act of idolatry, which would have been the greatest possible crime if it had indicated a total apostacy from God, did not draw down so much displeasure upon the heads of its perpetrators as the murmurs of the people at Meribah or the disrespect exhibited towards the divine will upon some other occasions.

The chief offences of which the Israelites were guilty in the life-time of Moses arose from those

* History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. 1, pages 538, 539

† Ibid.

defects in their character which were natural to a people born and bred in a house of bondage, *viz.* sensuality and pusillanimity. They fainted under the first trials of hunger and thirst—they murmured at the manna as unpalatable, and would gladly have returned under the yoke of their former masters, in the hope of being again fed from the flesh-pots of Egypt; and they shrunk from a contest with the nations against which it was the declared intention of God to lead them; for the latter of which offences, in particular, they were prohibited from entering into the promised land and doomed to perish in the wilderness.

The author of the *History of the Jews*, given in the *Family Library*, a writer who must be supposed from the general tenor of his work to be a sincere believer in the truth of the scriptures, although his history contains some statements and observations which few of those who read their Bible with attention can see without surprise and sorrow, takes a very extraordinary view of the retreat of the Israelites from the borders of Canaan. Having stated the repugnance of the people to advance against the Canaanites, he says, “in bitter disappointment the great law-giver perceives that a people accustomed to the luxuries of a relaxing climate and inured to slavery from their birth are not the materials from which he can construct a bold, conquering, and independent nation; but his great mind is equal even to those dispiriting circumstances, and in all the wonderful history of the Jews, perhaps nothing is more extraordinary than his conduct on this trying occasion. The decision is instantaneously formed—the plan of immediate conquest at once abandoned—the people are commanded on the authority of God to retreat directly from the borders of the promised land.”* It is however clear from the narrative, as given in the 14th chapter of the

* *Family Library—History of the Jews*, vol. 1, page 148.

book of Numbers, that the change in the line of march which the Israelites had been pursuing, is not to be considered as the result of a decision formed in the mind of Moses from policy, but was a penalty imposed on an offending people by God himself declaring in his wrath that they who would not "know his way should not enter into his rest," marking the duration of the punishment and pointing out the two individuals who alone were to be exempted from its operation. If Moses had been called upon to exercise a discretion upon this subject, his determination would probably have been formed upon very different principles from those stated by the modern historian; he could not be ignorant that, at whatever time Canaan was to be invaded, the success of the enterprise would not depend upon the relative strength of the invaders and of those from whom the promised land was to be wrested, and that the power which had repelled the mighty hosts of Pharaoh from the feeble multitude of the Israelites in their flight from Egypt, could drive out the petty nations of the Canaanites before the same multitude without waiting for an army composed of better materials for that purpose.

Nor is this the only instance in which the modern historian of the Jews has unduly exalted the character of Moses as a statesman, by making him the contriver of events and transactions which had a higher origin, and attributing to his sagacity measures which he adopted under the immediate impulse of inspiration without being aware of their causes or their consequences. Hardly any thing in the Jewish history was brought about by natural means, or was of human invention; and the son of Amram was no more the political director of the Israelites than he was the framer of their law, or the architect who designed the different parts of the ark and the tabernacle.

But to return from this digression to the remark cited above from the "Decline and Fall of the Roman

Empire," concerning the incredulity and indifference of the contemporaries of Moses and Joshua during the display of miraculous power recorded as having passed before their eyes. The assertion there made, which appears to be unfounded when considered with reference to those who lived in the time of Moses, is in direct contradiction to the account given in the Bible of the effect produced by the miracles wrought in Canaan upon the conduct, as well as the minds, of the race which crossed the river Jordan with Joshua; for it is expressly stated in the second chapter of Judges, that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel."* And it was when "all that generation were gathered unto their fathers and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done, that the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim."†

After the death of Joshua the Israelites were seduced into idolatrous practices by the examples of the nations who continued to dwell among them, occupying parts of the districts allotted to the different tribes on the partition of the land when it was first marked out for conquest. They brought this temptation upon themselves by the neglect they showed to God's commands in withdrawing themselves from the toils of war before they had brought their enterprise to its appointed termination, and contenting themselves with making tributaries of those whom they had been enjoined to destroy or to expel.

They were reproached with this misconduct, and apprised of its consequences by the angel of the Lord, at Bochim, in the following words: "I said ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land;

* Ver. 7.

† Ver. 10.

ye shall throw down their altars; but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you, but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.”* The people wept at this rebuke, and offered sacrifice, but were no longer aided by God in their military enterprises against those whom they had once admitted to terms of peace; on the contrary, the nations which Joshua left in the land when he died were kept there to prove Israel, “whether they would keep the way of the Lord, to walk therein as their fathers did keep it, or not.”† And these nations were accordingly, during a period of four hundred years, sometimes the subjects of the Israelites, and sometimes their allies, but became, not unfrequently, their masters, exercising cruel dominion over them.

After the children of Israel had been punished for their idolatries by repeated visitations of servitude, from which they were rescued at different times by judges, raised up occasionally for their deliverance, they were prompted by the discontents arising from the misbehaviour of Samuel’s sons, whom he had set over them as judges in his old age, to commit a new offence against God, by asking Samuel to change the form of their government, and make them a king to judge them like all the other nations, and go out before them and fight their battles.‡

The modern historian of the Jews represents this transaction in so very different a light from that in which it appears in the Bible, as to exhibit a striking instance, upon this occasion, of the disposition which betrays itself in different parts of his work, to overlook the peculiar circumstances in which the Israelites were placed, and to refer the events in which they were concerned to the operation of natural causes and the

* Judges, ii. 3.

† Ib. ii. 22.

‡ I Sam. viii. 20.

influence of such principles and motives as are most commonly found to actuate the human mind. He attributes the demand of a king by the Jews to a prudent policy, founded on their observation of "the superior efficacy of the monarchical government, which prevailed in the neighbouring countries;" and remarks that "the prosperity of the state under David and Solomon amply justified the deviation from the original constitution."* But surely, when he wrote this part of his history, he could not have had present to his mind the statements made on this subject in the first book of Samuel, from whose account it is clear that the desire of a change proceeded from the restless impatience of a discontented people, rather than from any other cause. The passage cited above goes on as follows. "The conduct of Samuel on this occasion was prudent and moderate. He fairly laid before the people the dangers of an oriental despotism, the only monarchy then known, with all the exactions and oppressions of arbitrary power, and left them to make their choice."† But Samuel did not conduct himself in the manner here reported; on the contrary, he was displeased when the people said "give us a king to judge us," and did not conceal his displeasure, or that of God himself, at this demand. It is stated expressly that, in answer to his prayer for directions as to the course to be taken upon this occasion, "the Lord said unto him, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. Howbeit, yet protest solemnly, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them;" and it was not until after the people had refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and had said, "nay, but we will have a king over us," and until after he had again referred to God, and had received a repetition of the

* Family Library—History of the Jews, vol 1, page 215.

† Ib. p. 216.

divine instructions to hearken to the people, that the prophet acquiesced in their decision. The historian observes it as a remarkable circumstance, and as tending to show the wisdom of the determination of the Israelites to have a king, that Moses "had anticipated this resolution, and providing for the contingency of kingly government, had laid down regulations for the election of a sovereign and the administration of regal power." "The law giver," he adds, "either perceived that a free republic, or rather a federal government of twelve distinct republics, was an experiment in the constitution of society, or that the external relations of the commonwealth might so far change as to require a more vigorous executive."

But to reason in this manner is to treat the law as a mere human composition. The form of government instituted among the Jews was not an experiment in the constitution of society, but was a state of society having no reference or analogy to that of any other community; and the regulations promulgated by Moses in the wilderness for the direction of the people, after their arrival in the promised land, were not the result of the foresight or sagacity of Moses, but the dictates of inspiration. Nor does the assertion of the historian concerning the prosperity, which he attributes to the substitution of a regal government for the original constitution given to the children of Israel by God, appear to be warranted by the events which took place after the change. He mentions himself, that out of 460 years, which preceded this demand of a king, above 300 were years of "peaceful and uneventful happiness," whereas of the three reigns which formed the whole period of the monarchy, the first, that of Saul, was most disastrous; a great portion of the second was disturbed by domestic dissensions and by signal judgments brought upon the people by the offences of David, in addition to the evils of foreign warfare;

and the reign of Solomon, though peaceful and glorious in its commencement, terminated in the defection of the king from God, and the consequent dismemberment of the kingdom. Nor can it be pretended that there was any want of a king to go out before them to battle against a foreign enemy at the time the people called for this appointment, since Samuel had recently broken the power of the Philistines by a great victory over them at Mizpeh, in consequence of which that nation had been obliged to restore all the cities taken from Israel, and to accept equitable terms of peace.

On the formation of the ten tribes into a separate kingdom, their first king, Jeroboam, though professing to retain his allegiance to the god of his forefathers, withdrew his people from the worship of the temple at Jerusalem, thereby (to speak in the language of scripture), "making Israel to sin."

His son Nadab walked in his ways, and was slain in the second year after his accession to the throne, which passed into different families, and was filled thenceforward by kings, all of whom were more or less guilty of idolatry. Some sacrificed to God before images, or in forbidden places, or with unlawful rites, while others paid their homage to the Lord jointly with Baal and other strange gods, and a few renounced the name of Jehovah altogether, and sought to eradicate his memory by destroying his priests, but even those who practised the less audacious kinds of idolatry, were said in scripture language to "forget" or "forsake" God, as withholding from him that unpolluted worship which he had himself prescribed as the only homage which he would condescend to accept at the hands of his chosen people.

Of the kings who held the sceptre of Judah, which descended in the family of David without interruption, a few were animated with a true zeal for the honour of God, but the greater number did evil in his

sight, and provoked the divine wrath by their idolatries and other offences, until after several visitations and chastisements had been inflicted on the Jewish people by enemies raised up against them for that purpose, they were carried away captives by the Babylonians, the holy city being destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, together with the temple and all the memorials it contained of the miraculous events which distinguished the history of the sons of Jacob from that of all other nations.

NOTE XIII.

ON THE APPLICATION OF THE TERM "NEW TESTAMENT," OR COVENANT, TO THE GOSPEL, WITH REFERENCE TO THE LAW OF MOSES, SOMETIMES CALLED "THE OLD COVENANT," OR "COVENANT OF WORKS," AND SOMETIMES CONSIDERED AS PART OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

THE gospel of Christ is the performance of the promise made to Abraham (when he obeyed the call to leave his country and his kindred at Haran and put himself under the divine protection), in these words—"In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed," and repeated to him after the trial of his faith by the command to offer up Isaac, as follows: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

When the christian dispensation is denominated the "New Testament," or covenant, it is so styled with reference to the Jews, as compared with that called the "Old Testament," *viz.* the covenant made with the children of Israel through Moses,* and not in contradistinction to the still older covenant entered

* See 2 Cor. ver. 6 and 14.

into with their ancestor. The covenant with Abraham is never represented as superseded, or in any way altered, either by the law of Moses, or by the gospel; but is on the contrary spoken of by St. Paul as a subsisting covenant, as a covenant, which the law, "given 430 years after, could not disannul." "The law," says the apostle, "was added because of transgressions" (*i. e.* to preserve the children of Israel from idolatry and other crimes, or to make them sensible of their weakness), "till the seed was come to whom the promise was made." In fact the law given at Mount Sinai did not convey to its hearers the knowledge given to Abraham, that the mercy of God would extend in its effects over the whole earth; nor did it contain any such communication respecting the intended redemption of man by the death of Christ, as that which was probably vouchsafed to Abraham, when he was prepared to offer up his son, but it veiled that event under types and figures, which they who lived under it could not understand.

There are six distinct occasions recorded in the Bible, in which it has pleased God to make declarations of his intentions towards man, called in scripture language "covenants." The first was, when Adam was placed in the garden of Eden, to stand or fall by his own acts. The second, when it was announced to Adam after his transgression, that the seed of the woman should finally prevail over his adversary the serpent; and the third, when God engaged to Noah, that he would not again bring a flood upon the earth to destroy it; on which last occasion, however, it does not appear that any promise was made connected with our redemption. The fourth covenant was entered into with Abraham in conformity to the declaration made to Adam after the fall, and was co-extensive with the former in its benefits, not being limited in this respect to any particular portion of the human race. The fifth was the covenant with the Israelites,

through Moses, which was national and temporary, being a system of arrangements preparatory to the birth of the Saviour, who was to carry the promise to Abraham into effect.

The mosaic covenant is sometimes styled "everlasting," but that word must always be interpreted in scripture according to the nature of the subject to which it is applied—sometimes it means "perpetual," but it often signifies no more than "of long duration," or to continue till the purpose to be answered by it should be effected. In the 17th chapter of Genesis, verse 9, it is said, that the land of Canaan shall be given to Abraham and his seed after him, "as an everlasting possession." Perhaps, however, the national covenant with the Jews might have given them pre-eminence as a people, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of Canaan for a possession, as long as this world was to endure, if they had not (to use the words of the prophet Isaiah, xxiv. 5), "broken the everlasting covenant by their transgressions" before the advent of Christ, and finally renounced it afterwards by their deliberate rejection of him. The last covenant is that of the gospel, which fulfils the declaration made at the fall, and is in truth an "everlasting covenant," admitting of no further addition or alteration.

The same covenant, *viz.* that made at Mount Sinai, is sometimes described as a covenant of works, and at other times considered as a part of the covenant of grace, according to the view which the speaker is taking of his subject. St. Paul, arguing with the Jews, and showing the inferiority of their law to the gospel, and its want of power to fulfil or complete the engagement made with Abraham, describes it as a covenant of works, which it certainly was, when taken separately, and as a whole, having no means of justification in itself except works; but when all the recorded dealings and transactions of God with man respecting his salvation are brought at once under review, and

the different divine declarations or covenants are classed under two heads, the former of those made to Adam is properly denominated "the covenant of works," while the latter, and those which follow it, form together one merciful dispensation, or "covenant of grace," introduced by the promise to Adam after his fall, and perfected and accomplished by the death of Christ and its consequences, as set forth in the gospel.

Nor is there any thing contradictory in calling the same law a law of works, or of grace, according to the aspect under which it is viewed. The regulations respecting children and minors in a free country might be said to keep them in a condition, which is a state of bondage, as compared with the liberty enjoyed by their adult brethren; but in a comparison between the institutions of such a country and those of a land under the yoke of slavery, these temporary restraints would be considered as a part of a law of freedom.

NOTE XIV.

ON THE CONTINUANCE OF JUDAH AS A DISTINCT
TRIBE TILL THE ADVENT OF THE MESSIAH, AND
THE SUBSEQUENT DISPERSION OF THE JEWS.

It is universally agreed, that the person designated by the term "Shiloh," in the prophecy recorded in the 49th chapter of Genesis, is the Messiah, though various reasons have been given for our Saviour's being so called, founded upon different interpretations of the original sense of the word. Some have supposed it to mean "the Peacemaker," and some "the Child" or "Son," or "the August;" but others interpret it "the Sent," a person sent by God, an

appellation somewhat similar to that of "the Messiah" or "Christ," which is "the anointed," *viz.* the person ordained to be a king and priest. Our Lord was also called sometimes "the Person who was to Come."

The nature and character of the events which befell the children of Israel, after they were settled in Canaan, were correctly described in the predictions delivered to them by Moses at the close of the recapitulation of their previous history, and of the law which he addressed to the people a short time before his death. When they hearkened unto the voice of God and walked in his ways, they were prosperous both at home and abroad, enjoying fruitful seasons in the land which the Lord had given them, and overcoming all their enemies; but whenever they turned aside from God, the soil was smitten with barrenness for their sake, and they were delivered over for punishment to the neighbouring nations.

Their transgressions were great and frequent, and signal were the visitations with which they were afflicted, and the deliverances they experienced, in the times both of the Judges and of the Kings, until the idolatries of the kingdom of Israel terminated in the destruction of that kingdom and the dispersion of the ten tribes of which it had been formed; the kingdom of Judah, not long afterwards, was completely conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, who demolished the temple and the holy city, and carried away the people captive to Babylon.

It had, however, been foretold by Jacob, when he announced by inspiration to his family what was to befall them in the latter days, that his fourth son, Judah, should not only have pre-eminence over the rest, but that "the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh should come," and that unto him should the "gathering of the people be;" a prophecy which imported that the tribe of Judah should continue to be a distinct tribe, with rulers and judges and governors of its own, until

the arrival of the Messiah, after whose advent the distinction between Jews and Gentiles was to cease, and the chosen from all nations were to be gathered to Christ as to their common head.

In conformity to this prediction, which was delivered about eleven hundred years before the Babylonish captivity, before which event each of the other tribes had ceased to have any political existence, the descendants of Judah, instead of being scattered among different nations, remained together as a distinct people at Babylon, appointed feasts and fasts for themselves, and had rulers and governors of their own, and at the end of seventy years were allowed by Cyrus to return to their native land, where they rebuilt their temple and city, and solemnly renewed their covenant with God, incorporating with themselves many of the Israelites who had joined them from the dispersed tribes.

From this time they were successively under a degree of subjection to the Persians, Greeks, and Romans, but still lived, as a distinct people, under their own laws. The sceptre, however, was departing from Judah at the time of our Lord's crucifixion; for it appears that the Jews did not then possess the power of inflicting capital punishment; and a few years after that event their political existence as a nation was destroyed by the fall of Jerusalem, a catastrophe to the horrors of which history furnishes no parallel. Since that time they have been scattered as wanderers from one end of the earth to the other, exiles from their own land, without finding any other resting place, dispersed among all people, but confounded or incorporated with none, "an astonishment, a by word, and a proverb, among all nations."

Being yet, however, blind to the light of the gospel, they are unable to discover what those heinous transgressions are for which they have undergone so long a punishment. From idolatry, the great crime of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, they have been

free since their return from Babylon ; and that offence was only visited on Judah by a captivity of seventy years ; whereas their present degradation has already lasted one thousand eight hundred, and continues without any prospect of an early termination. A learned Jew wrote to his friend, about seven hundred years ago, as follows :—" I would fain learn of thee out of the testimonies of the law and the prophets and other scriptures, why the Jews are thus smitten in this captivity wherein we live, which may be properly called the perpetual anger of God, because it hath no end. For it is now above a thousand years since we were carried captive by Titus. And yet our fathers, who worshipped idols, killed the prophets, and cast the law behind their backs, were punished only with a seventy years' captivity and then brought home again ; but now there is no end of our calamities, nor do the prophets promise any." *

It appears also, that a great council of the Jews, which was assembled five hundred and fifty years afterwards in Hungary, to deliberate on that very subject, found it utterly inexplicable.

To the above question, on the part of the Jews, an answer will be found in the events recorded in the New Testament, and in those only. Their fathers, who killed the prophets, were visited with a captivity of seventy years ; but those of their fathers, for whose offences they are now suffering, put to death the Son of God, and met the attempt of the Romans to save him with that dreadful imprecation " His blood be on us and on our children." Nor is it only for the guilt of their fathers that they are now under punishment. They are suffering from their own want of belief in the things revealed to them. They have long ceased to substitute the worship of idols for that of the true God, but they still refuse to hearken to his voice or acknowledge his Messiah.

* Gisbourn's Survey of the Christian Religion.

There are, however, many intimations in scripture that a time will come when their afflictions shall cease. In what manner, or at what time, their restoration to the grace of God shall be effected, we are not told, and it would be idle to conjecture; but we are fully instructed by St. Paul concerning the sentiments we should cultivate in regard to them, and the lessons we should derive from their present condition. We are not to indulge ourselves in feelings of anger or contempt against them, considered as the enemies of God, but should respect them as his people, under chastisement indeed for a time, but still the object of his love, and to be received again, after a time, into his favour; and we are further admonished not to be exalted in our own conceit by a comparison of our own knowledge and obedience with their unbelief, but to profit by their unbelief as a warning to teach us humility and the fear of God.

“Boast not,” says the apostle, “against the branches; but if thou boastest, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then the branches were broken off that I might be grafted in: well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.”*

NOTE XV.

ON THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

To a Jew, conversant from his infancy with a series of predictions concerning the deliverance of mankind from the power of Satan, commencing with the sentence pronounced at the fall of Adam, and brought

* Rom. ii. v. 18., &c.

down through many ages till within a few hundred years of our Lord's advent, the proof of Christ's being the Messiah, the Lamb of God, who was to take away the sins of the world, arising from prophecy, unfolded and explained by our Saviour himself to his disciples, might possibly be stronger even than that afforded by the exhibition of the miracles which he performed; but among the Gentiles, to whom the gospel was not preached until after our Lord's ascension, and who had then no knowledge of the particulars of the sacred oracles in the keeping of the Jewish nation (although a general expectation seems to have prevailed through the whole of the east, about that time, of the approach of some remarkable personage), the rapid diffusion of christianity must have been mainly owing to the display of the miraculous powers with which the apostles were invested, coupled with the testimony which they bore to the wonderful events of which they had been eye witnesses, and with the effect which the doctrines taught by them appeared to have produced on their own character and behaviour.

The evidence, however, afforded by the fulfilment of prophecy soon came in aid of the new religion, when the civilised world beheld the unparalleled sufferings of the Jewish nation on the destruction of their temple and the holy city, and observed the escape of the christian converts flying from the devoted walls of Jerusalem in obedience to the warning they had received.

In the present state of christianity and of literature, when we have the Old and New Testaments spread open before us, and can compare these sacred records with the accounts of former transactions in profane history, and with our own knowledge of what is passing round us in other parts of the earth, we cannot but see that the arguments furnished by prophecy and miracles mutually confirm and illustrate each other, and form together an irresistible mass of testi-

mony of the truth of the gospel, in addition to the internal evidence of its divine origin, from the purity and moral beauty of its precepts, and the close analogy which the system of God's government, disclosed by revelation, bears to what we experience daily under the law of nature in the present constitution of things in this world.

Upon these last topics, however, it becomes us to speak with great caution; the proper province of human reason, in matters of religion, is to examine into the evidence on which it is founded; and although, in investigating the proof of a communication from heaven, we must in some degree consider the general conformity of what is propounded for our belief to those of God's works and dealings with which we are already acquainted—and though we cannot indeed but take largely into the account, in an inquiry into the truth of the gospel, the wide difference between the representations of sacred things given in the inspired writings and the fables of Greece and Rome, or the extravagant fictions of the oriental mythology, yet it is not for us to fancy ourselves competent to sit in judgment on the particulars of what is revealed to us, and to reject (as too many have presumed to do) whatever we find in the scriptures that is not brought down to the level of our finite capacities, or that may not square with our notions of fitness or expediency.

It is indeed among the proofs of the reality of the revelations recorded in the Bible, that they have never been accommodated to the prejudices or feelings of man, but, on the contrary, have commonly contained, with many things which are beyond his comprehension, much that was very contrary to his expectation.

Even in matters which appear to fall within the range of the human intellect, revelation has often tried the faith of those to whom it has been vouchsafed, by requiring from them an assent to things hard to

be believed, with a course of action which seemed very ill calculated to forward the declared intentions of Providence. When it was revealed to Noah, one hundred and twenty years before the event took place, that God would bring a flood upon the earth, and sweep away in one common ruin all that dwelt upon its surface, (man, beast, and bird, except the few for whom the ark was to be prepared,) the patriarch received a revelation to which he was unable to make any convert out of his own family, and from which many, who now presume to raise questions on the threatenings of the gospel as inconsistent with their ideas of the divine mercy, would certainly, if they had been living in those days, have withheld their belief; and when it pleased God to give Abraham an insight into his gracious plans for the redemption of mankind by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the communication was made by calling upon him for the performance of a deed which seemed not only at variance with his natural affections as a father, but inconsistent with the promises previously made to him by God himself, the son, whom he was commanded to offer up for a burnt offering, being his only son, and the very individual previously pointed out as the person in whom, and in whose seed after him, the covenant of mercy was to be established.

Nor, during the short course of our Lord's ministry upon earth, could his followers acknowledge him as the Messiah without feeling the greatest disappointment (to which indeed they do not appear to have been ever reconciled while he abode with them in the flesh) at the failure of the magnificent expectations in which they had been educated concerning him. They looked for a temporal sovereign, a mighty conqueror, who should collect the scattered remnants of the race of Jacob, restore the faded glories of the house of David, and erect an empire in Israel, to which the kingdom of Solomon, in all its splendour,

should bear no comparison: instead of which, they found their homage claimed by a person of humble station, of meek manners and demeanor, who exhibited nothing captivating or commanding in his personal appearance, and held out no prospect of power or advantage to his adherents but, on the contrary, taught a people, who had learnt under the law of Moses to look upon adversity as a consequence of the displeasure of God, that they were to welcome poverty and tribulation as marks of the divine favour, and told his followers plainly that it was difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Accordingly, the disciples expressed strongly the astonishment they felt at a doctrine so unexpected and so decidedly at variance with their experience under the law: "who then," say they, "can be saved?" To which our Lord answers, in terms which declare the inability of man to disengage himself from the allurements of this world by his own natural strength, and refers them to the divine assistance to be vouchsafed under the christian dispensation to such as are sincerely desirous of embracing the truth—"with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

So, when the apostles were sent forth to preach the gospel to the gentiles, they were apparently without any adequate means of accomplishing the mighty object of their mission, which was nothing less than to effect a general revolution in the minds of men, and to overturn the existing religious establishments of every country in which their doctrines should prevail. They were neither statesmen nor philosophers, nor in the possession of those advantages of station or talents which confer weight and influence on persons who enjoy them. They went out from a country little known, and in no credit or estimation among the neighbouring nations—from a people described

* Matt. xix. 26.

by the historian Tacitus as "the most despised portion of the slaves of the Roman empire." They were the followers of a master whom they had seen ignominiously put to death as a malefactor, notwithstanding the powers which he had exercised of working miracles, and from whom they had themselves fled in dismay when he was apprehended by his enemies; nor were the associates whom it pleased God to join with them from among the heathen, in their labours, of such a description as to bring any material accession of strength to their cause, or to justify in the sight of man their hopes of that ultimate success, in the full confidence of which, founded upon their faith in the divine promises, they persevered in their undertaking with unabated cheerfulness through toil and suffering;—"for ye see the calling of you, brethren," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, call you, but the foolish ones of the world God hath chosen to call you, that he might put to shame the wise—and the weak ones of the world God hath chosen, that he might put to shame the strong ones; and the ignoble ones of the world, and the despised ones, God hath chosen, and those who are not, that he might bring to nought those who are, that no flesh might boast in his presence."*

So true it is, that even in those parts of God's plans in which he makes use of human instruments, he does not proceed upon the principles of human policy, but acts in such a manner as to confound the pride of man, and makes us feel that it is not our province to judge of the wisdom of his ways even in this world.

* 1 Cor. i. 26.—Macknight's translation.

NOTE XVI.

ON THE DISCOVERIES MADE TO MANKIND BY THE
GOSPEL.

"I DEEM it unnecessary," says Archdeacon Paley, in his view of the evidences of christianity, "to prove that mankind stood in need of a revelation, because I have met with no serious person who thinks that, even under the christian revelation, we have too much light, or any degree of assurance which is superfluous."

By him, however, who is unconvinced of the fact of God's having revealed himself to man, it will not be admitted that any light or assurance whatever has been derived to us from the preaching of the gospel; and it should therefore seem expedient at least, if not necessary, that for the conversion of such a person, the proof, which the state of the heathen world so abundantly furnishes, of the want of some manifestation of God's will and intentions, should precede the historical evidences of christianity, while to the christian himself it cannot but be of the utmost importance to learn and feel, not only that mankind stood in need of revelation, but how much they needed it, and how highly he has been favoured by Providence in having his lot cast in a christian country, above the millions of his forefathers, who lived and died in ignorance, or the inhabitants of those regions into which the light of revelation has not yet penetrated.

Among the matters revealed in the gospel, the information which was calculated to attract the attention of its hearers in the first instance as forming

the ground-work of the religion of Christ (although the nature and sanction of the law given at Mount Sinai had not required that it should be inculcated on the children of Israel by Moses) was the doctrine of a day of retribution after this life, a doctrine which placed the whole state and condition of man in a new light, opening prospects to his views beyond the grave, and giving a fearful importance to his present abode upon earth, as connected with his destiny hereafter. Accordingly, we find St. Paul announcing, in the outset of his address to the Athenians, that the God whom he declared to them has "appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained."

While the powers of man were unassisted by revelation, his horizon had been bounded by the tomb intercepting all beyond it from his sight. The notions of an Elysium, in which they who had behaved meritoriously in this life were to pass their time in such pursuits as constitute men's happiness on earth, and of Tartarus as a place of punishment, though taught or encouraged among the people by their priests and rulers in the parts of the world where the gospel was first preached, were derided in private by the learned, and not unfrequently spoken of with contempt as fables, even in public assemblies, while in the schools of philosophy the condition of the soul after the dissolution of the body by death was discussed as matter of curious speculation rather than as connected with any practical consequences to arise from such discussions in the conduct of human life. Some held that the soul of man perished with his body, and some that it survived for a limited period; some that it returned on earth to animate other human bodies, or even the bodies of inferior animals: and there were some who believed that it was reabsorbed, after it left the earth, into a subtile ethereal spirit or essence, by which they supposed every thing in the universe having life

or motion to be actuated. But among the various theories or conjectures in which the philosophers of the ancients indulged, there was nothing which resembled the doctrine of the resurrection as unfolded in the gospel; nor were the minds either of the Epicureans or Stoics prepared to receive it; on the contrary, as soon as St. Paul spoke to them of God having raised our Saviour from the dead, "some mocked," and others turned from him, as from a teacher who was broaching sentiments too incredible to merit their attention, saying, "we will hear thee again of this matter."

The patriarchs, as we know from scripture, felt that they were only pilgrims and sojourners upon earth, and looked to another life for the accomplishment of those promises which they had not received in this; and intimations of a future existence are given in the prophetic writings, more or less obscurely, at different periods of the Jewish history; but it is clear that the doctrine of rewards and punishments after death was not employed among the sanctions of the mosaic law, and that for any practical purpose "life and immortality" (or immortal life) were "brought to light," through the gospel, to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles.

It has been well observed, as a circumstance which distinguished the gospel from the inventions of all those who have endeavoured to impose upon human credulity by pretended revelations, that it confined its communications to such disclosures as were called for by the purpose which it had in view, which was to encourage man to work out his own salvation; and that the apostles abstained from the common artifice of impostors, *viz.* the practice of engaging on their side the curiosity of their hearers, and of appearing to gratify that longing to pry into the secrets of futurity, which has prevailed among mankind from the time when our first parents stretched out their hands to

take of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge to the present hour.

We are told in scripture, that, on a day not yet revealed to any created being, the earth will be destroyed by the Power which made it, and that all its inhabitants, without distinction, must appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, the dead being to rise from the grave upon that occasion, to stand for judgment with those who shall be found alive at our Lord's coming.

The gospel gives us no information respecting our intermediate state between the time of our death and the day of judgment; but it proclaims that every one is on that day "to receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;" expressions which unquestionably exclude the supposition of the soul's being able, when separated from the body, to do or suffer any thing (even if it should retain its consciousness during such separation) to change the sentence it is to receive. And, whatever imaginations the Romanists may form to themselves respecting purgatory, the scriptures seem to negative any notion of such a state, by uniformly connecting together the ideas of death, as the termination of that period of trial, with reference to which man is to be rewarded or punished, and the day on which he is to appear for judgment, without adverting to any intervening period or event. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. x. 27, it is said that Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, "as it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment;" where the argument evidently requires that we should understand the judgment to follow the death of man, without any intermediate transaction on his part by which it is to be affected.

The declaration published to mankind in the gospel, concerning the proceedings to take place at the day of judgment, contains abundant matter to rouse the human mind to exertion, by awakening the strongest emotions

of hope or fear, although it is not calculated to furnish such details as may serve to satisfy the curiosity of philosophers, nor enters into explanations which the faculties of man in his present state would probably be unable to comprehend.

We are told, that at the sound of a trumpet, the bodies of all who have died since the creation of the earth, in all countries and ages, whether buried in the ground, burned on the funeral pile, or otherwise disposed of, shall revive, and that not only the actions of men, but their hidden motives, and the secrets of all hearts, shall in some miraculous manner be brought to light. The future state of those whom Christ will acknowledge as his servants is no where particularly described; on the contrary, it is said in general terms that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of men, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."* But we are informed that a great alteration will take place in our nature, corporeal and spiritual; "that Christ will change our vile body into the likeness of his glorious body;" and it appears that a part at least of our happiness will consist in an enlarged capacity of contemplating the works of God and even God himself, and of taking delight in his perfections; and that we shall dwell in close communion with angels and with the spirits of just men made perfect, in the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; while, on the other hand, the abodes of those who shall have disobeyed or disregarded the divine word in this life, are represented under the terrible images of the "fire prepared for the devil and his angels," and of a place where shall be "weeping and gnashing of teeth." We are also informed, that although there are various mansions, or degrees of happiness, for the righteous, and although different measures of punishment will be assigned to the guilty, in proportion to their offences

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

(it being said that of him to whom much is given much will be required, and that the servant who best knew the will of his master, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with more stripes than his fellows), yet to remain with our Saviour in heaven, or to be cast down among the objects of the divine displeasure, is the awful alternative; there being no intermediate state provided for such as have served two masters, or have failed in their obedience to God, without venturing to renounce their allegiance to him. And, finally, we are warned that the condition to which we shall be doomed by this tremendous judgment is to endure, through all eternity, an endless state of enjoyment without fear of change, or of suffering without hope.

Of the two great sects of philosophy into which the learned were divided in those parts of the earth, in which the gospel was first preached, the Stoics taught that man was intended by the gods to be virtuous in his present state, but that he required no assistance from them to enable him to practice virtue here, being fully competent, as they held, to controul his own passions and propensities, and even to subdue the sense of pain, which they therefore denied to be an evil; while the followers of Epicurus, on the other hand, strangely exaggerated the weakness and imperfections of humanity, maintaining the earth and all its inhabitants to be so full of defects that they could not be the work of an intelligent mind, but consisted of particles of matter thrown together by accident.

It is difficult for a person of plain sense, who has never indulged in philosophical speculations, to conceive how much elaborate researches into subjects, which the reason of man is not equal to fathom, tends to obscure his perception even of that which lies open to his observation, as by straining the eye to reach what is beyond our sight we sometimes incapacitate it from taking a correct view of nearer objects. The

sages of antiquity framed their systems to account for the present state and condition of man, upon a very limited knowledge of facts, and then bewildered themselves in suppositions to support their theories, of which the most ignorant of their hearers must have perceived the falsehood or absurdity if he had exercised his own judgment instead of referring to authority. They reasoned upon a long chain of events, of which they saw but a small portion, as if the whole lay stretched out before them, and attempted to explain the creation of the earth as if it were an insulated transaction, to be viewed without reference to any other occurrences past or future.

Revelation, however, extending the range of human knowledge over parts of the history of the universe concerning which we could have no natural means or opportunity of obtaining information, has enabled us to separate what is true in the doctrines or tenets of antiquity from that which was fictitious or imaginary, and shows us how much we have yet to learn before we can understand the dispensations of Providence. The scriptures inform us that man is not now in the condition in which he came out of the hands of his Maker, but has lost the image of God, and is become subject to sin and death ; while the earth on which he dwells has also been deprived of much of its native beauty and fertility, to be a fit abode for him in his fallen state, or, in the language of the Bible, is cursed for his sake. We are moreover furnished with information which enables us to view our present situation in connexion with the proceedings of a race of evil spirits, originally of a superior class to ourselves, but, for some cause unknown to us, degraded from their former place in heaven, and labouring under the divine displeasure, who, having succeeded through the artifices of their leader, Satan, in drawing our first parents into the guilt of disobedience, are still seeking by a secret influence, which they are permitted in a limited degree to gain over our minds, and by such interference as

they are allowed to exercise in the affairs of this world, to complete their conquest over mankind, and to involve their victims in the misery to which they know themselves to be destined. Revelation has also, in these latter days, made us acquainted with the gracious means which it has pleased God to employ for our redemption from sin and death and our advancement to a higher degree of happiness than was enjoyed by man before the fall.

In reading the scriptures upon these subjects it should ever be remembered, that they were written to furnish us with such information concerning the position in which we stand in this world, as should enable us to perform our duties in the present life, and not for the purpose of enlarging our minds or increasing our knowledge in such a manner as to qualify us to comprehend the general plans and counsels of the Almighty. We are told what God has done, in some instances, before we were born, and he has declared what he means to do, in some others, after we shall have returned to the dust from which we were taken ; but it was not the object either of the Old or of the New Testament to unfold to us in detail the mysterious ways of Providence, or to explain the reasons of the course taken by the Author and Governor of the universe, even with reference to the few events which have been disclosed to us.

We know not why the transgression of Adam and Eve was followed by the exclusion of their posterity from Paradise and their degradation from that state in which, as it should seem, they would have been placed had their parents resisted temptation ; nor why the sins of the fathers among the Jews were visited upon their children to the third and fourth generation ; nor why the offspring of such as have never heard of the gospel, or have disregarded it, stand in a less advantageous position under the christian dispensation than the issue of pious believers in the gospel ; nor does it appear to be necessary that these matters should be

revealed to us ; and to set ourselves to search into such subjects, or to inquire why the serpent was permitted to tempt Eve, or why men are allowed to tempt each other, or why evil of any kind is permitted, is to indulge in speculations which, to say the least of them, are useless, but which are highly mischievous if they divert our attention from the communications vouchsafed for the regulation of our conduct, or lead, as they too often do, to unwarrantable criticisms on the works or proceedings of God, and to discussions, in the course of which the divine attributes of omnipotence, wisdom, justice, and mercy are indirectly denied or called into question.

We should justly blame the folly and presumption of a traveller who, being about to pass through a strange country with a treasure of great value in his charge, and having had it notified to him, by authority, that the road which lay before him was intricate and infested by robbers and wild beasts, but that on making a proper application to the rulers of the land he might obtain guides and guards, instead of receiving with gratitude the notification made to him, and acting upon it without delay, should employ himself in endeavouring to trace out the causes which had prevented the government from having constructed a plainer road, or in questioning its conduct in permitting the existence of the annoyances which rendered its interference for his protection necessary. And yet, there would be this difference between this case and that of the christian who shall busy himself with such inquiries as those alluded to above, *viz.* that the pains of the traveller, how much soever they might be misdirected, would yet be employed on subjects not lying beyond his reach, whereas the curious christian inquirer is endeavouring to lift up a veil which it is far beyond his strength to raise. "The secret things," says Moses, when he is warning the Israelites to fix their attention and that of their posterity on the knowledge which is practical, in words which are quite as applicable to

these times as to those in which they were spoken, "belong to the Lord our God; but the things, which are revealed, belong to us and to our children, that we may do all the words of this law."

NOTE XVII.

ON THE ATONEMENT AND THE INCARNATION OF
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND ON THE OPINIONS
ENTERTAINED CONCERNING THE NATURE OF
CHRIST.

THE doctrine of the atonement for the sins of this world by Jesus Christ, or the reconciliation of mankind to God by the sacrifice of his Son, is peculiar to christianity, and is in truth the corner-stone of the fabric of our religion. "We preach," says the apostle, "Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." We are taught in the scripture that no sacrifices, gifts, or prayers, which we can offer, are sufficient of themselves to make amends for our transgressions, or procure pardon for them from heaven; but that whatever grace we may receive at the hands of God, we must owe to the merit and death of Christ, through whom alone, as having by his sufferings appeased the divine wrath and redeemed us from the curse laid upon the human race at the fall, our Creator is now to be approached by those at least to whom the gospel has been preached; for in what manner the redemption obtained for man is to operate in favour of persons, who died before our Saviour's advent, or who have had no opportunity since of becoming acquainted with his name, we are not informed.

That our Lord laid down his life voluntarily, pursuing a course which he knew would terminate in his death, and pointing out his crucifixion as prefigured by the erection of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, and as necessary for the accomplishment of the purpose for which he came upon earth, no christian professes to doubt ; but there are some who refuse to view his death in any other light than as an attestation to his sincerity and the truth of his doctrine, or as a previous step to his resurrection, being unwilling to conceive of it as a sacrifice for sin, because they cannot trace any connexion, in their own minds, between the suffering or death of one being and the forgiveness of another.

It may, however, properly be asked of those who cannot make up their minds to believe any thing upon the faith of revelation, which it is beyond the grasp of human reason to comprehend, what connexion they have found between the slaughter of animals for sacrifice, commanded unquestionably by God in some parts of the earth, if not originally instituted by the divine direction, and the pardon of man—or whether, while they cannot bring themselves to think that the blood of Christ can operate to cleanse from guilt, they can believe that the blood of bulls and goats has been efficacious to that purpose—or what other consequence they attach to the practice in former days of offering up animal sacrifices, if they reject the explanation of such sacrifices as were preparatory to the sacrifice of Christ, or prophetic of that event. And if they require to be convinced of their inability to comprehend the ways of Providence in matters which seem to lie much nearer to the level of our capacity than the arrangement under which the salvation of man is to be effected, let them see if they can account for the grant to the posterity of Noah, from the time of the flood, of every moving thing that lives upon the earth for food ; or try to discover why the inferior animals in this world prey upon each other ; and the course of

nature is so ordered as to render it necessary that a large proportion of the creatures, which God has endued with feeling and life, should be destroyed by a violent death for the subsistence or comfort of the rest.

There is no fact mentioned in the Bible which is more distinctly stated or oftener referred to than the atonement made for mankind by the death of Christ. Our Lord says of himself, before his crucifixion, that he "came to give his life a ransom for many."* He was pointed out by St. John, on his first appearance, as the Lamb of God, which "taketh away the sins of the world," and is afterwards described by him as "the propitiation," or expiatory sacrifice for the sins of those to whom St. John was writing, and not for theirs only, but "also for the sins of the whole world."†

St. Peter says of him, that "he bare our sins in his own body on the tree (or cross), and that we were healed by his stripes,"‡ and again, that he "hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."§ He is represented by St. Paul to have "been made sin," or a sin offering (for the same word in the Greek has both these senses) "for us."|| It is stated in the Epistle to the Colossians, that "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins,"¶ and that it pleased the Father, having made peace "through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself."** In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is said, that "not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered at once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us;"†† that "once in the end of the world he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;"‡‡ that he was "once offered to

* Matt. xx. 28.

§ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

** 1 Colos. i. xx.

† 1 John ii. 2.

|| 1 Cor. v. 21.

†† Heb. ix. 12.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

¶ Colos. i. 14.

‡‡ Ib. ix. 26.

bear the sins of many;" * that "we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Christ once for all;"† that "after he had offered once for all one sacrifice for sin, he sat down for ever on the right hand of God;"‡ that "we enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;"§ and there are many other passages in the New Testament which describe or allude to the death of Christ as an expiatory sacrifice for sin.

It has been urged as an argument against our so considering it, that the language employed in the scriptures upon this subject is figurative, and may be taken to be used by way of accommodation to the ceremonial observances and ordinary phraseology of the Jews; but to this it may obviously be answered, that some of the expressions cited above cannot be so construed as to have any meaning at all if they do not denote a real efficacy in the death of Christ to put away sin; and that instead of explaining away the obvious import of this language by supposing it to be accommodated to the Jewish ceremonial law, we should look upon the ceremonial law itself as framed with reference to the actual redemption of man, to be accomplished under the dispensation of the gospel, the former being the shadow or figurative representation of what was to come, and the latter containing the substance or reality. This is expressly stated in the 9th chap. of the Epistle to the Hebrews, || "without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, [*viz.* the sacrifice of bulls and goats] but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but unto heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

Connected with the doctrine of the atonement, and forming a part of the same article of our belief, is that

* Heb. 28.

§ Ib. x. 19.

† Ib. x. 10.

|| Ib. 22, 23, 24.

‡ Ib. x. 12.

of the incarnation, or the coming of Christ in the flesh, *viz.* the union of the divine and human nature in the person of our Lord, a truth which the mind receives with more difficulty than it experiences in believing that the pardon of one person should be obtained through the sufferings or merits of another.

Concerning the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, three different opinions are entertained by persons calling themselves Christians and professing to receive the scriptures as a revelation from heaven. The Socinians assert, that our Lord was a man, and nothing more, although highly gifted, and sent on the earth with extraordinary power and for a special purpose, *viz.* to reclaim the human race from their evil ways; not, however, by bearing any part of the punishment of their guilt in his own person, but simply by publishing the will of God to mankind. They deny, therefore, both the atonement and the divinity of our Saviour, and their doctrine is at variance, not only with all those passages in the scriptures which assert that he was a sacrifice for sin, but with all those in which he claims a closer union with the Father than can be attributed to a mere man, or speaks of himself as coming down from heaven, or as superior to the sons of Adam; and which cannot possibly be reconciled with the answer made by him to the Jews, when asked whether he had seen Abraham—"before Abraham was, I am," a declaration, in which he assumes the title chosen by the Almighty to describe himself to Moses and the Israelites, as denoting an existence independent of time.

The Arians admit the atonement made by Christ for the sins of the world, but they do not acknowledge either his humanity or his divinity, believing him to be "of a middle nature, between the first cause of all things and the creatures, which from a state of non-existence were called into being,"* and they interpret

* See Jorton's Eccles. Hist. vol. II. p. 28.

the assertions of Christ's coming in the flesh to mean that the *Logos*, or Word of God, supplied the place of a soul to a human body. But before we could assent to this view of the subject, it would be necessary to expunge, or explain away, all those texts which assert distinctly, that Christ was man, and especially the remarks in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that Christ "took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham," and that "it behoved him to be made in all things like unto his brethren."

The Trinitarians, seeing that Christ is sometimes represented in scripture as the Son of God, and sometimes as the Son of Man, and finding him in many places positively stated to be God, with divine power and attributes, and in as many described as man, think themselves compelled to conceive of him that he is both God and man, and to acquiesce in the doctrine of the union of the divine and human natures in the same person.

This union moreover is asserted by St. John in terms which appear to leave no room for doubt or hesitation on this head. After stating that "the Word was in the beginning, and was with God, and was God," the apostle says, "and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."* It is to be remarked on this passage that the term "flesh" is often used in scripture to signify the whole man, and not merely the body or material part of man—as when it is said that "no flesh should glory in the presence of God,"† or that "God will pour out his spirit upon all flesh." So in the Psalms it is said, "I will not fear what flesh can do unto me,"‡ and our Lord says that flesh and blood had not revealed to Peter that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God, but that this revelation had been made to the apostle by the Father.§

* John i. 14.

† 56 Psalm, 5.

† 1 Cor. i. 29.

§ Matt. xvi. 17.

It may further be observed, upon the subject of the union of God and man in the person of Christ, that as his divinity was apparent from the circumstances connected with his birth, and from the whole tenor of his life and actions, so it was further shown by what passed at the time of his crucifixion, the exclamation which he uttered a short time before he expired upon the cross being more intelligible if we believe that what was divine and not subject to death was at that time withdrawing itself from that part of the man Jesus which was mortal, than upon any other supposition.

The facts of the Son of God having taken upon him the nature of man, and of the subsequent exaltation of the man Jesus Christ to sit on the right hand of God, and the declared intention of Christ to admit such of his brethren to a similar union with himself as should obey his commandments, and become thereby the heirs of his gracious promises, are altogether beyond our comprehension : and the Athanasian Creed states very properly on the subject of the incarnation, that "as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ."

We are so utterly incapable of comprehending how spirit can be united to matter, and so unable to account for their mutual operation upon each other in man, that some have absurdly doubted whether there be any such thing at all as matter, and whether whatever we suppose ourselves to be and feel may not be imaginary and a mere delusion of the senses ; while others have as rashly endeavoured to persuade us to discard from our minds the notion of spirit, and have contended that the thinking power in man is material. Men of plain common sense will probably continue to retain their original belief, that man consists of an incorporeal soul and a material body, although we certainly cannot discover how two substances seemingly so dissimilar are joined together, or are made to act the one upon the other ; and a very little reflection

may be sufficient to teach such men that they must not expect to attain clearer ideas on earth of the nature and constitution of the divine person who descended from heaven for their salvation, than they are able to form concerning their own.

NOTE XVIII.

ON THE INTERFERENCE OF EVIL SPIRITS IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS WORLD, AND ON THE PERSONAL AGENCY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

THE situation of man upon earth may be said to resemble that of the commander of a fortress in a state of siege, with a garrison composed of troops who are very little to be depended on, and a large proportion of whom are unquestionably well inclined to the enemy: but a christian man has these advantages, that he possesses full information respecting the force and designs of the besiegers, and is aware of his own weak points, and of the best means of strengthening his defences: he also knows, that to obtain terms of capitulation is impossible, for that the object of his assailants is his final ruin, while he is assured that he fights under the eye of an all-seeing and all-powerful sovereign, and that a determined resistance on his part, conducted with vigilance and perseverance, cannot fail of being ultimately successful, and receiving an ample reward. "We wrestle," says St. Paul, "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* And St. Peter, exhorting Christians to be "sober" in the government of their

* Ephes. vi. 12.

appetites and passions, and "vigilant," that they may guard themselves against every occasion of mischief from our spiritual enemies, states expressly, as a reason for this caution (which comes with great propriety from one whom too much confidence in his own powers had once betrayed into the denial of his master), that our "adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."*

It was a strange fancy in some of the early Christians to doubt whether the account of the creation and fall of man, given in Genesis, might not be interpreted allegorically, although it was allowed that, in the rest of the book, Moses must be taken to be speaking literally and historically. This notion, however, is now pretty generally exploded. The actors and events mentioned by Moses are often referred to incidentally in the scriptures, in proof or illustration of other matters, and there is no hint in the Bible that any portion of the Mosaic account, which purports to be a narrative of real transactions, is a fable or a parable.

The devil is always described as at enmity both with God and man. He is styled, in different passages in scripture, "the adversary," "the accuser," "the evil one," "a murderer from the beginning,"† "a liar, and a father of lies," "the serpent that deceived Eve through his subtilty,"‡ and "that old serpent called the devil and satan, which deceiveth the whole world;"§ and to him is attributed, as to its author, all the evil that comes into the heart of man, all wicked thoughts, words, and actions being represented as his works, or as proceeding from the host of which he is the chief or leader (for what is spoken of him in some places is applied in others to him and his associates collectively, as engaged in the same designs, and doomed to undergo the same sentence). "He that committeth sin is of the devil," says St. John, in his first Epistle, "for the

* 1 Peter, v. 8.

† St. John, viii. 44.

‡ 2 Cor. xi. 3.

§ Rev. xii. 9.

devil sinneth from the beginning; for this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil."*

It appears, from the scriptures, that these malignant spirits will finally abide in a place of punishment, in which they will be joined by those among mankind who shall have yielded to their seductions in this world, and disclaimed or neglected the service of God on earth. Our Lord himself has described the awful sentence to be pronounced on that portion of the human race which shall be excluded from his kingdom at the day of judgment, as consigning them to "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:" and St. Peter, when he is showing that the vengeance of God will overtake human transgressors, observes, that "he spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, reserving them for judgment."† And St. Jude alludes to the same circumstance, nearly in the same terms: "The angels, who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitations, he hath reserved in everlasting chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day."‡

It is, however, to be understood that this general confinement is compatible with such a degree of liberty as may enable them to come occasionally upon earth, and to exercise an interference, to a certain extent, or in particular cases, in the affairs of this world, while it continues in its present state. When our Lord was about to expel the devils from the men who came out of the tombs in the country of the Gadarenes, they asked him whether he were come "to torment them before their time,"§ alluding evidently to the final sentence to be passed on them at the day of judgment; and "they besought him that he would not command them

* Ch. iii. 8.

† St. Jude, vi.

‡ 2 Epist. of St. Peter, ii. 4.

§ Matt. viii. 39.

to go out into the abyss,"* (translated in our Bibles "the deep") and meaning, probably, the prison or place in which they were usually confined. In the book of Job Satan is represented as stating himself to have been "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it," and as permitted upon that occasion to bring certain calamities upon God's servant for the trial of his faith and patience.

In several parts of the Old Testament mention is made of the agency of evil spirits in this world. In the First Book of Samuel, ch. 16, it is said that the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and "an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him;" *i. e.* was permitted by God to get possession of his mind, which appears to have been soothed and refreshed by the music of David's harp, and the evil spirit thereupon departed. And when Ahab, king of Israel, was meditating his expedition, in conjunction with Jehoshaphat, against the king of Syria, he was informed that the predictions of success which he had received were deluding him, for that Micaiah had learned from a vision that a spirit had undertaken to be "a lying spirit in the mouths of his (Ahab's) prophets, and to persuade him to go up and fall before Ramoth Gilead, which happened accordingly."†

In the New Testament mention is made in the Revelations‡ of God letting Satan loose to deceive the nations. And in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the man of sin (whoever or whatever may be meant by that term) is described as coming "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders."§

It is, however, in the gospels that we find the most distinct accounts of the influence exercised by evil spirits upon the bodies and minds of men, an influence which was probably displayed more openly and to a

* Luke viii. 31.

† 1 Kings, xxii.

‡ Ch. xx. 8.

§ 2 Thes. ii. 10.

much greater extent at the time of our Saviour's advent, than either before or after that period, in which the empire of Satan was to be shaken to its foundation by the miraculous powers exerted by Christ and his disciples.

The view which is taken of this subject by the most eminent of modern Socinians, Dr. Lardner, and the notion maintained by this learned writer, that the passages in the gospels asserting the agency of evil spirits in the production of disorders, mental or bodily, by which particular persons were afflicted, are mere accommodations to the ordinary phraseology and prevailing opinions among the Jews, and that "the parties cured and their friends (to use the Doctor's own language) attributing these disorders to Satan and demons under him, our Saviour often adapts his expressions to that opinion, without countenancing or approving it," furnish a striking proof of the incompetence of a most powerful and pious mind to see its way, when it sets itself to bring down the facts and doctrines recorded in the scriptures to the level of the human understanding. "Possession by evil spirits," says Dr. Lardner, "is a thing in itself absurd and impossible, or at least unreasonable and improbable, and not to be supposed unless there be clear and full proof of it, which I think there is not. Man consists of soul and body, and it seems to me to be unsuitable to the wise methods of Providence that other spirits should enter into any man, without his consent, and actuate and govern him." And again, "real possessions seem inconsistent with the goodness of God."

It would not be very easy to conjecture what evidence would be considered by the author of the above remarks as amounting to a satisfactory proof of circumstances which he thinks it hardly possible * "fairly to reconcile with the wisdom and equity of the divine

* Vol. i. p. 463.

government;" but to those, whose eyes are not darkened by a veil of prejudice upon this subject, but who believe the scriptures to have been written under the superintendence of inspiration, the evangelists will probably appear to have spoken plainly and positively enough concerning the connexion of evil spirits with the affairs of this world, in many of the cases which they have stated, to compel our assent to their accounts taken in a literal sense.

It is to be observed in confutation of those interpretations which would make the demoniacs simply diseased persons or lunatics, and the mention of the devils a mere personification of the disease or lunacy, that although the evil spirits are often introduced as afflicting those in whom they are said to have entered with such infirmities, yet this is not always the case; on the contrary, in the very first place in which the persons possessed with devils are stated to have been brought to Jesus and healed, they are expressly mentioned as distinct from such as were diseased or lunatic. So when our Saviour sent for the twelve apostles to preach the kingdom of God, he gave them power and authority "over all devils, as well as to cure diseases."* And when the mission of the seventy was ended, they "returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name."†

In some cases the devils expostulated with Christ, acknowledging him to be the Lord;‡ and in others "they were not suffered to speak, because they knew him."§

It seems also quite impossible to explain many of the other circumstances stated by the evangelists relating to the evil spirits mentioned in the gospels otherwise than by the supposition of their being real agents—such, for instance, as their entering into the

* St. Luke, ix. 1

† Ib. x. 17.

‡ Mark, i. 24.

§ Ib. i. 34.

swine, in the case already alluded to, after obtaining our Lord's leave. Dr. Lardner endeavours to account for the swine running into the sea by supposing that the man said to have been possessed was a lunatic, and drove them over the precipice; but this is contrary to the narrative, which represents the man as cured before the swine ran down the steep places, and sitting clothed and in his right mind, after that event, and does not notice any thing to have been said or done between the destruction of the swine and his recovery.

On the general subject of these demoniacs, Dr. Lardner admits that "the evangelists seem to have believed real possessions, and to have thought that divers of the afflicted persons, whose cures they relate, had evil spirits;"* but he says this ought not "to be thought strange, even supposing there were no agency or interposition of evil spirits, for the opinion of possessions being common at the time, and generally admitted by the knowing, as well as by others, it is no wonder that the evangelists should be of the same sentiment. The twelve apostles of Christ were unlearned men—our Lord chose to have such for apostles, and he did not teach them philosophy but religion." And Dr. Lardner then goes on to argue, that "if the apostles had been more knowing than others in this and other points of a philosophical nature," the credibility of their accounts might have been diminished, and "some would have been apt to charge them with art and contrivance in the main parts of their history, whereas there is now, he says, "no room for such charge or suspicion."

But although the apostles were not conversant with the arts and sciences, nor with any such knowledge as is the fruit of human learning, it is a strange supposition to assume that they participated with their

* Vol. i. p. 482.

countrymen in their ignorance of those matters, which were only discoverable by revelation, and in particular of our relations with the spiritual world, and to impute to the records of inspiration that they are framed in such language as to strengthen delusion, and perpetuate popular errors, upon such subjects. It must, moreover, be remembered that Christ himself speaks to his disciples of persons labouring under infirmities, as under the influence of evil spirits, when he is questioned by them in private, respecting the deaf and dumb devil whom they were unable to cast out. "This kind," says our Lord, "can come forth by nothing but prayer and fasting;" and when he is explaining privately the parables of the sower and of the tares appearing among the wheat, he represents himself in the former case as the sower of the good seed, and the wicked one, or Satan, as taking away the word from the hearts of those who do not understand and cherish it; and in the second, he states the same enemy as having sown the tares among the wheat, thereby plainly showing that the devil is actively engaged in endeavouring to disturb the peace and good order of the present world, an undertaking in which, as we collect from scripture, he will continue to be employed with partial success until the final separation of bad men from the good, and the condemnation of the former to abide with him in his proper dwelling place at the day of judgment.

The ground, however, of the difficulty which Dr. Lardner feels in believing that evil spirits can be suffered to obtain an influence over the minds and bodies of men, and which he seeks to avoid by departing in his interpretations of scripture from the plain and obvious meaning of what we find written there, is not very apparent. Why, it may be asked, should the agency of evil spirits; in producing such disturbances or aberrations of intellect as we find recorded in the New Testament, or such diseases and infirmi-

ties as are noticed there, be more difficult to reconcile with the wisdom and goodness of God, than the existence of the same evils arising out of some other cause to us unknown ?

When we read in the New Testament that men were possessed or afflicted by devils, we do not understand them to have been entirely abandoned by God, and delivered over to Satan and his associates to be dealt with as he or they should think fit ; but we collect from the representation, that in the afflictions they endured, whatever might be the nature or extent of their sufferings, the enemies of mankind were concerned as agents or instruments. We know that neither bodily disorders nor any of the various trials and temptations, to which we are exposed in this life, occur by chance ; and although we do not see from whence the evil thoughts and desires, which at times intrude into the minds of the least faulty of the human race, are derived, we feel assured that they cannot be suggested without a prompter ; and what is there so surprising, as to be beyond belief, in the intelligence that the same malignant influence, which formerly betrayed our first parents to sin and misery, should now be engaged in tempting and plaguing their descendants ?

The fact of the agency of the tempter upon man is very explicitly stated in the New Testament. We are told in express terms by two of the evangelists that the devil put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray his master.* And it is mentioned, that he entered into the traitor† after the sop was given him by Christ. Our Lord also tells Peter, that “ Satan had desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat,” ‡ *i. e.* assault him by violent temptations, but that he, our Lord, “ had prayed for him, that his faith might

* St. Luke xxii. 3.—St. John xiii. 2. † St. John xiii. 27.

‡ St. Luke xxii. 31.

not fail." And Peter himself, when he is afterwards upbraiding Ananias with his impious attempt to conceal a part of the price for which he had sold his estate, conveys his reproach in the following question: "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost?" plainly implying, first, that Ananias had been urged by Satan to tell the falsehood, and secondly, that he might have resisted the suggestion.* The temptation also of Christ by the devil recorded in St. Matthew† was evidently a real transaction, and not a vision nor a dream, as appears not only from the language of the narrative itself, but from the reference made to it in the Epistle to the Hebrews,‡ where it is expressly stated, that "Jesus took upon him the nature of man," and that "he himself suffered being tempted."

We might, indeed, have great reason to repine and be cast down if the gospel had made no other discovery to us, in regard to our situation in this world, than that we were beset on our march through life by spiritual enemies, and that the powers of hell were leagued for our destruction; but the same revelation which has taught us our danger and our weakness, has given us the fullest assurance of protection and support from heaven—has communicated to us the knowledge of the divine influence which watches over the church in the person of the Holy Ghost—and has furnished us with instructions as to the means to be employed to procure the assistance of which we stand in need.

While our Saviour continued upon earth, he told his disciples that he would pray the Father, who would give them another Comforter to abide with them for ever;§ and again, to abate the sorrow they felt at the intelligence of his intended departure, he says, "it is expedient for you that I go away: for

* Acts v. 3. † Ch. iv. 1. ‡ Ch. ii. 18. § John xiv. 16.

if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." *

Accordingly, on the fiftieth day after our Saviour's resurrection, and the tenth after his ascension into heaven, the Holy Ghost came down upon his disciples assembled in prayer with a sound as of a mighty rushing wind, and with the appearance of flames of fire, conferring on them the gift of tongues, with other supernatural powers; and the same Spirit fell visibly, upon other occasions afterwards, upon those upon whom the apostles laid their hands for that purpose.

We are not informed of the exact period during which the manifestations of the descent of the Holy Spirit and his extraordinary operations upon earth were continued, but there seems to be no sufficient reason for believing them to have been exhibited long after the apostolic age; and possessions and other open indications of the interference of the devil in the affairs of this world, having probably been permitted to take place at the first establishment of christianity for the display of the divine power over every part of the creation, they may be presumed, in the absence of any authentic evidence upon the subject, to have ceased when the visible signs and tokens of the divine presence were withdrawn.

We know that the ordinary influence of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of men is still operating on their behalf, as is that of Satan for their destruction; although in neither case do the time and mode of such agency come under our observations; nor is the presence of such agents among us now discernible, otherwise than by the effects which they produce upon our conduct; the one giving occasion to those violations of our duty which are called in scripture "the works of the devil;" while the other brings forth fruits of an opposite nature, drawing our affections insensibly

* John xvi. 7.

towards heaven, and creating or strengthening, in our hearts, the love of God and of our brethren.

By neither, however, is any force applied to the human mind, to destroy or overrule our free-will, or any such interference exerted, with our natural power of directing and controlling our own actions, as can take from us our responsibility for the course we may pursue. We are persuaded, but not compelled; invited, but not constrained; not listed against our own consent, but permitted to choose the master in whose service we will engage, and forewarned of the wages we shall receive. When St. Peter tells us, that if we resist the devil he will flee from us, he leaves us to infer that if we do not resist him, he must prevail; and we learn from a passage of scripture, in which there is an evident allusion to the appearance of the tongues of fire at the day of Pentecost, that we may "quench" or extinguish the Holy Spirit, and that we may "grieve" him; an expression, by which we are graciously reminded, that we are counteracting the benevolent designs of Providence in our favour when we transgress. We are also told in another place, that from whatever quarter our trials and temptations may proceed, "God will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation also make us a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it."*

It is by the aid of the Holy Spirit that we shall be able to find this way; but it is by our own exertions only, added to his protection, that we must avail ourselves of it, when found. So far is the gospel from representing Christians as placed by it in a state in which they may repose securely on the divine grace, and give themselves no further trouble in regard to their future welfare than that of sometimes acknowledging the goodness and mercy of God by an occa-

* 1 Cor. x. 13.

sional attendance on his public worship, that it inculcates in almost every page the necessity of the utmost vigilance and diligence on our part to bring the contest, in which we must continue to be engaged with Satan, as long as we remain on earth, to a favourable issue. And although we have the strongest assurances of support from the Spirit of God, provided we shall not be wanting to ourselves, still we are required to seek him by prayer, and to prepare our minds by virtuous resolutions to receive him. And as we cannot expect that the Holy Spirit will condescend to enter into the heart of man, unless it be cleansed from sin for his reception, so it is certain that unless we co-operate with him faithfully, when he comes there, he will not remain with us.

NOTE XIX.

ON THE APPOINTMENT OF GODFATHERS AND GOD-MOTHERS.

THE custom of having godfathers and godmothers in baptism is of great antiquity in the christian church, though not mentioned in scripture, nor deemed absolutely essential to the validity of the sacrament; for when the child is in sudden danger of death, or not likely to live long enough to be brought to public baptism in the church, it may be baptised and named privately at home, and received publicly into the church afterwards, if it shall survive; in which case there are no sponsors called upon to enter into any covenant on the child's behalf, until the public recognition of the baptism previously performed.

It seems highly proper that some persons should

undertake for the right instruction of the child in the meaning of the christian covenant and in the duties imposed thereby ; but it is unfortunate that a canon of the church should have excluded the parents from being sponsors, as the practice of appointing other persons to that office—a practice intended to afford increased security for the child's education by super-adding other christian teachers to those who are bound by nature to instruct it—tends to weaken and relax the sense of obligation entertained on that head by the parents, without creating a proper feeling of what is due either to God or the child in the parties apparently chosen to supply their place.

The parents promise nothing in baptism, as now administered, while the sponsors think very little of what they have promised, when the ceremony is over, having, generally, consented to act in that character, either for the purpose of paying a compliment to the parents, or as accepting a mark of respect offered to themselves in the appointment. The connexion between the godchild and its sponsors is now considered as a mere worldly tie, sometimes entitling the former to call upon the latter for their patronage or attention to its temporal interests in the upper ranks of life, and occasionally remembered by a legacy at the death of a godfather or godmother, but seldom leading to any communication respecting the proficiency of the child in spiritual knowledge, or its fitness to be received by the bishop into the church.

It is quite notorious that more regard is now paid to the rank, wealth, and consequence of persons chosen for sponsors in this country, than to their piety, or to any presumed intention upon their part of executing the duties of the office they undertake ; and yet the duties of godfathers and godmothers are very distinctly and solemnly announced in our form of baptism. After the sponsors have professed their own belief in the main articles of the christian faith, and promised

for the child that it shall keep God's holy will and commandments through life, they are reminded, that "forasmuch as the child has promised by them, its sureties, to renounce the devil and all his works, and to believe in God, and to serve him, they must remember it to be their parts and duties to see that the infant be taught, as soon as it shall be able, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession it hath made by them," and they are enjoined "to call upon it to hear sermons," and to "provide that it should learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, in the vulgar tongue, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health." And they are to take care that their godchild be brought to the bishop to be confirmed. It does not however appear that the godfather and godmother possess any power either by the canon or common law to interfere in the child's education, without the consent of the parents, or can even call upon it to put an end to their engagement on its behalf by attending on the rite of confirmation—and this circumstance, among other reasons, seems to point out that the parents, or those by whose authority the child is brought to be baptised, are the proper persons to take on them the baptismal vow in his name, whereas at present, for want of any exhortations or admonitions in our service to the natural parents concerning the christian education of the child, they are too apt to consider themselves as discharged from all responsibility upon that head by the appointment of others to this duty.

It would tend much to give importance and efficiency to the office of godfather and godmother, if means could be devised, without material inconvenience, of enabling the church to call upon them (their names being recorded at the time of the baptism for that purpose), in case they should be living at certain periods of the child's age previous to confirmation, for some account of their godchild's proficiency in the

knowledge of its christian duties; and it might possibly bring the rite of confirmation into more general use, if it were the custom to register it in the same manner with baptism.

Perhaps some temporal consequences might properly be made to depend upon such registrations—for instance, it would surely be reasonable to require of every candidate for holy orders that he should produce an extract from a church register to show that he has ratified and confirmed the christian covenant in his own person, and has received the benefit of the prayers and blessing of the bishop on that solemn occasion.

NOTE XX.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

WHEN Christ sent his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, he commissioned them to baptise “in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,”* and the church has accordingly retained that form of baptism to the present day. The great question among Christians is, who or what is to be understood by those expressions. They have been interpreted by some (*viz.* by a set of men called Sabellians) merely as three names for the same person, while they have received such a construction from others, as to be descriptive of three separate beings or existences.

The doctrine of worshipping one God in trinity, and trinity in unity, or the acknowledgment of three

* Matt. xxviii. 19.

persons and one God, is intended to exclude both these representations; and it professes rather to say what is denied by it, for the purpose of contradicting these errors, than to afford us any information, affirmatively, concerning the nature of the Godhead.

That the Father is properly called a person no one doubts; and whatever controversies have arisen respecting the Son, relate to his humanity or to his divine nature, and not to his personality, the latter not being disputed. But the Holy Spirit has been maintained by many to be merely a virtue, or a quality, or a course of action personified figuratively, by ascribing to the virtue or the quality what is done by the party possessing or exercising it, in the same manner as when we say, that "Wisdom crieth in the streets, Charity suffereth long and is kind," we mean nothing more by these expressions than that the wise or charitable person doth these things. But it is a decisive objection to this view of the subject, that many of the acts attributed to the Holy Spirit are such as cannot be said to be done by any party under his influence or direction, as where the Spirit intercedes for us with the Father, neither man nor the Father being the party interceding. He is also spoken of in many passages of the New Testament in terms that denote a personal agency, as where he is called "another Comforter," to be sent after Christ shall have gone away from his disciples, or when it is said that he shall speak, not of himself but of the Father, &c., or where the Holy Ghost is represented as conferring a great variety of powers and gifts.*

Nor can we at all lessen the difficulty of this subject by explaining away the personality of the Holy Ghost, unless we are prepared to deny with the Arians the divine nature of Jesus Christ; for if we could bring our minds to believe that in the blessing

* 1 Cor. xii. 8.

which St. Paul pronounced on the Corinthians, *viz.* “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all,” the apostle is speaking of persons in the two first members of the sentence, and of a quality in the last, we should still find the existence of two persons in the Godhead quite as great a mystery as the union and equality of the three. We therefore keep as closely as possible to the language of the scriptures, by calling each of those, to whom personal actions are ascribed, persons, while we guard at the same time against the inference of a plurality of gods by affirming that there is only one God, neither confounding the persons with the Sabellians, nor dividing the substance by making the Son of a different substance or nature from that of the Father, with the Arians. In short, we assert in the Athanasian Creed—that we find the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each of them spoken of and represented in scripture as divine persons;—we further acknowledge that the same scriptures distinctly tell us there is only one God;—and we declare our belief that the whole of what we read in scripture must be true.

The Athanasian Creed does not profess to reconcile or explain the doctrine of three persons and one God, nor does it pretend to enable those who repeat it to understand a subject which is confessedly beyond the reach of the human intellect; but it leads to this practical consequence, that we should address ourselves to each of the three persons mentioned in it separately in prayer, and to the whole Trinity collectively.

The clauses sometimes called the damnatory clauses must be taken, like the statement of our Lord that they who do not believe the gospel shall be damned, as applicable to those only, who wilfully shut their eyes against the truth, loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; or who

wilfully corrupt, or treat with irreverent neglect, the doctrine of revelation. As however there are many pious persons who give these clauses a wider construction, and who cannot therefore repeat them with a safe conscience, it is a great pity that they are not laid aside, or else explained by the addition to the rubric of some short declaration of the sense in which they are to be understood. Perhaps the latter of these expedients for removing all cause of offence from this part of our Liturgy would be the most judicious, there being many persons who would certainly object to our leaving out any portion of a creed which is supposed to have been drawn up thirteen centuries ago, and has been in general use among Christians for nine hundred years.

NOTE XXI.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF A GENERAL KNOWLEDGE
OF THE SCRIPTURES AS A PRESERVATIVE AGAINST
ERRORS FOUNDED ON SINGLE PASSAGES—ON
FREE WILL—ON THE UNIVERSALITY OF REDEMPTION—ON FAITH AND GOOD WORKS.

WE know from scripture that God requires obedience from his servants, and that it is incumbent on all to whom his gospel has been preached, to keep his commandments. It follows, therefore, that although it may become us to be cautious how we indulge our curiosity concerning the nature of the deity, by entering into such inquiries or speculations upon that head as are more likely to perplex our understandings and minister occasions of controversy among Christians than to lead to any practical advantage, we

can never be too anxious to discover his will, and can hardly bestow too much of our attention in examining into the relations in which we stand towards the Creator and Governor of the universe.

It may seem at first sight that a considerable portion of our time ought to be dedicated to the contemplation of such of the glorious works of God with which we are surrounded as seem best calculated to awaken our admiration of the divine power, and our gratitude for the arrangements which the bounty of Providence has contrived for our support and comfort ; but the study of what is called "natural philosophy," though a fit employment for such as have leisure to bestow upon it, is not universally necessary, nor is it always profitable or productive of religious feeling. Experience does not justify us in assuming that human knowledge and piety will always go hand in hand, and that whatever progress we may make in the former will be attended with a like increase in the latter. On the contrary, humility of mind, the great basis of all true wisdom and of every christian virtue, is not unfrequently destroyed or injured by the pride of science ; and the countryman who knows no more of the sun and moon than that they appear to pass over his head once in twenty-four hours, often feels more grateful for the benefit which he derives from them, than the philosopher who understands the nature and course of the heavenly bodies and can explain their influence upon the tides of the ocean, and calculate their motions and eclipses.

In a state of society in which it is required that the bulk of the people should learn to read and write, and should be taught to think for themselves in a much greater degree than would be consistent with the habits of life of the multitude in countries where little progress had been made in civilisation, the essential part of education must be instruction in the scriptures. It is to the sacred records of revelation that the people

must look for the rules which are to guide their conduct in this world ; and it is in the study of the Bible and in a thorough acquaintance with its contents, enabling them to compare one part of the sacred volume with another, to contemplate the lives of those whose actions are written there for our instruction, and to understand and feel the general tenor and spirit of the word of God, that they will find their best preservative against the delusions of false doctrine, and especially against some errors which have their foundation in particular passages of the Bible, taken out from the rest, and either misinterpreted or improperly applied.

Of this description is that doctrine of Calvinism which teaches that man has no power over his actions, but that some are selected to be virtuous here and happy hereafter, and others doomed to sin and eternal misery, by divine decrees, which have no reference to our belief and conduct as depending upon our own will, a doctrine that has reduced many an humble-minded Christian to a state of gloomy despondency, while it is calculated to lead men of a more sanguine temperament into the practice of unbridled licentiousness.

The passages from which the Calvinistic conclusion is drawn are those which represent events as foreseen and pre-ordained by God, and it does not seem possible for us, in any view which we can take of this subject, to reconcile these passages satisfactorily with the free-agency of man, nor, indeed, with that of the Almighty himself, for when events are stated to be foreknown, they appear to our limited faculties to be necessarily fixed and immutable ; and accordingly, some of the heathen philosophers held that Jupiter himself was controlled by fate. But it must be evident that we are not competent to enter into subjects of this nature, and the consequences deduced from the texts alluded to are utterly incon-

sistent with the whole tenor of the New Testament, teeming in every page with exhortations, promises, and threatenings, which would be nugatory and unintelligible if we were without power to attend to them, and could not choose for ourselves whether we would act under their influence.

There are, moreover, passages in the Bible, more in number than the texts, on which the Calvinists rely, asserting by necessary implication the freedom of man's will; "if I say the truth," observes our Lord to the Jews, "why do ye not believe me?"* and again, "why do ye not understand my speech?"† In another place, upbraiding the Jews with their unbelief, he says, "if ye were blind, ye should have no sin."‡ So again, "if I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin;"§ and again in that beautiful lamentation uttered by Christ over the holy city, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and ye would not!"||

It is needless to multiply quotations upon this head; in the very passages which are brought in support of the Calvinistic doctrine, predestination, as stated in scripture, is shown to be consistent with free-will. The rejection and crucifixion of our Saviour is uniformly represented in the New Testament as pre-ordained by God, but they are, nevertheless, always imputed as offences to the Jews. "Him," says St. Peter, "being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God ye have taken, and by wicked hands, have crucified and slain."

Another opinion derived by the Calvinist from a

* John viii. 46. † Ib. 43. ‡ Ib. ix. 41. § Ib. xv. 22.

|| Matthew xxiii. 37.

few texts, which, if not compared with other parts of holy writ, might seem to favour that notion, is that Christ died for a few only among mankind, and that the remainder of the human race, including even the greater part of those to whom the gospel has been preached, have no interest in his passion. But this also is directly contrary to the general scheme of christianity disclosed in the scriptures as well as to particular passages. St. Paul expressly represents Adam as "the figure of him that was to come,"* and states, that "as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free-gift came upon all men to the justification of life;"† and again he says, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."‡ And in the Epistle to Timothy he says that God our Saviour "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."§

We are, therefore, bound to believe that all the generations of men, past, present, and future, derived some benefit from the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, although we are not informed, and cannot of course discover by our natural faculties, in what manner that benefit can be conferred upon those to whom the gospel is not preached.

The error of those who hold that we are saved by faith without works, maintaining that our own actions are not in any manner material to our salvation, does not appear to have taken its rise from any inherent difficulty on the subject of faith and works, but is founded entirely upon a misinterpretation of some passages in the New Testament.

The Romish Church, indeed, which asserts not only that good works—meaning thereby works done in obedience to the will of God (for none other can be

* Rom. vi. 14.

† Ib. 18.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

§ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

called good among Christians)—are meritorious, but that the merit of them may be transferred or assigned over from the party by whom they are performed to the account of another person, teaches a doctrine for which it would be difficult to find any pretence or countenance in holy writ, substituting the inventions of man for the gospel. We certainly learn from the New Testament, that a Christian may make himself the instrument of benefit to his neighbours by example, by instruction, and by other means, including prayer to God on their behalf; but he can have no merit to bestow on them, since we are told distinctly that, “when we shall have done all those things which are commanded us, we shall be but unprofitable servants.” *

They, however, who have run into the opposite extreme of doctrine to that maintained by the Church of Rome, and who, not satisfied with denying that our good works can be handed over to others, contend that we have no occasion for them ourselves, being saved by faith alone, seem to have fallen into that mistake from not having attended to the different meanings of the word “faith,” which may either be confined to a belief of certain facts and doctrines, or may denote that belief coupled with its practical influence on the heart, and constituting a ground or principle of action.

When faith is mentioned in the Bible, the term is usually to be taken in the larger sense, but its consequences are different according to the subject matter of it and the various circumstances under which it is exerted or exhibited. When the gospel was first promulgated, faith in Christ amounted to no more than a belief of his being the promised Messiah, accompanied by a readiness to acknowledge him in that character, and most commonly evinced by some declaration or

* Luke xvii. 10.

by some external act, such as that of touching the hem of his garment, mentioned in St. Matthew's gospel,* or of bringing persons from a distance to be healed by him. When the term is applied to the sentiments of his disciples, it comprehends zeal for his honour and the advancement of his kingdom, of which, however, they had no very clear idea in his life-time. It will be found in every case, in which the faith of a Christian is mentioned in the gospel, that it comprehends more than a mere assent of the understanding—no one would say that the devils, who knew Christ to be the Son of God, as appears by their complaining of his being come to torment them before their time, and asked his leave to go into the herd of swine, had faith, in the gospel sense of that word.

It appears that to such faith as was ascribed to the disciples of Christ, was given the power of working miracles, and possibly it was attended with other powers and results, but unless it led to the belief and practice of the other doctrines of revelation, it could not be effectual to the final salvation of those who might possess it. This is stated by our Lord himself in express terms, "not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven;"† and he goes on to say, that many would be rejected on the day of judgment, who had prophesied and cast out devils and done wonderful works in his name, *i. e.* whose faith had been a belief in his miraculous powers, unaccompanied by the effect which such a belief ought to have produced on their conduct. And when he gives an account of the proceedings to take place at the last day, he mentions nothing but the good works resulting from faith as the ground of the sentences which he will then pronounce.

St. Paul himself, in whose writings the doctrine of

* Matt. ix. 22.

† Ib. vii. 21.

salvation by faith without works is supposed to be found, shows very distinctly the nature of the faith which he means to represent as effectual to its object, when he exhibits the splendid list of eminent persons who have obtained favour or deliverance in consequence of it. "By faith," says the apostle, "Noah, being warned by God of things not seen as yet, and moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house," * *i. e.* he not only believed that God would bring a flood upon the earth from which the righteous should be preserved, but he carried into effect the orders given him to provide for his own preservation and that of his family by building the ark—a work, in the course of which he had probably some obstructions to encounter, and certainly met with much discouragement and ridicule from an infidel world, which he endeavoured in vain to awaken to a sense of its danger by his preaching. So Rahab effected her preservation by faith, not simply by participating with her countrymen in the belief that God had given Jericho to the Israelites, but by acting upon that belief in concurrence with the divine will, and concealing the spies at the risk of her life. It is unnecessary to dwell on the signal instances of Abraham's faith, exemplified first in his leaving his country and his kindred at the call of God, and afterwards in the willingness he manifested to offer up Isaac, or to enumerate the many instances of faith recorded in the same writings, all including works, and accompanied by obedience of some kind or other; and it may be asked of those who think that a confidence in God's infinite mercy is to supersede a compliance with his injunctions, whether, when they read the account of Lot's escape from Sodom, they suppose that if he had believed in the approach of the danger foretold, but had refused or neglected to flee from it, in the con-

* Heb. 11.

fidence that God would not suffer his servant to be involved in the punishment of the wicked, the house of the patriarch would have been passed over by the storm of fire and brimstone by which the rest of the city was destroyed.

It has sometimes been said, that the thief upon the cross was saved by faith without works; but, on the contrary, he did all that it was in his power to perform. He repented him of his former crimes—he acknowledged the justice of his sentence—he rebuked the blasphemy of his companion, and he adored the Son of God as his Saviour in the moment of his humiliation.

It is surprising that any one should ever have dreamed of separating faith and good works, since faith, though implanted in the human heart by the divine influence, can only be kept alive and brought to maturity by the performance of the duties which it enjoins.

It is said in the 12th article of our church, that “good works are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may as evidently be known as a tree discerned by the fruit.”

But surely the comparison between faith and a tree furnishes but a very inadequate illustration of this subject. A tree may fail to produce fruit, and may nevertheless attain its full growth, and reach the natural period of its existence; but it is not so with a barren or unprofitable faith; good works are not merely the evidence or the result of a lively faith; they are quite as much cause as effect—they are to faith what exercise is to bodily health; and it is no more possible for faith to grow, or even to continue, without them than it would be for the muscles of the human frame to arrive at their natural strength or retain their proper tone, if not occasionally brought

into action. They, indeed, who deliberately deny the necessity of good works, or of the performance of the duties enjoined by the gospel, must abandon all pretensions to christian faith; for it is no part of the privilege of a Christian to believe as much of the revelation made from heaven as may suit his wishes and feelings, and to disbelieve the remainder; to open his ears wide to the declarations of the divine mercy, and to refuse to listen to the conditions on which it is declared; to give credit to the promises, but to withhold it from the threatenings of the gospel.

Of the necessity of good works to our salvation Christ himself has spoken in words too plain to admit of doubt or misconstruction, and too awful not to call for our most serious attention. "The hour is coming," says our Lord, speaking of the judgment which the Son of man is to pronounce upon mankind, "when all that are in the grave shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good into the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."*

NOTE XXII.

ON THE DUTY OF RECEIVING THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE Church of England teaches in its Catechism that there are two sacraments ordained by Christ himself as *generally necessary* to salvation—Baptism and the Supper of our Lord; but the present practice of many of its members seems to proceed upon a belief that the

* John v. 28, 29.

latter of the two is *generally unnecessary*, and some of those to whom we ought to look up for instruction, as ministers of the gospel, so far countenance this view of the subject as to refrain from urging to come to the Lord's table such as feel any reluctance to attend it, and acquiesce, at least in some degree, in the disuse of this rite among the generality of Christians, by certifying to the bishop, as fit for confirmation, persons who do not profess themselves prepared to become communicants.

That attendance at the Lord's table, like all our other duties, should too often be neglected cannot be surprising to any who observe how grievously we all fail in our obedience to the commands of our Redeemer, and how deficient we are in our sense of gratitude for the sacrifice made by him on our behalf; but the reason, commonly given by some persons who abstain from joining in this rite of our church, betrays so gross an ignorance of the nature and end of the institution, and of the situation in which they stand before God, as to afford a melancholy proof of the want of sufficient attention to the religious education of youth in this country.

It is not unusual for such as are asked, why they do not take the sacrament, to answer, that they do not think themselves good enough, and fear to aggravate their guilt by approaching the Lord's table unworthily. If they, who use this language, only mean by it that they are not sufficiently free from sin to be fit, from their own purity or on account of any merit they possess, to present themselves before God, this must be true of the parties making the excuse as of all other men; but taken in that sense, it is nothing to the purpose, since no Christian can presume to eat of that bread which is the memorial of the body of Christ, and drink of the cup which represents his blood, on any other ground than in compliance with the invitation of our Lord himself, given to all (the greatest

sinners not being excluded) to partake of these holy mysteries in remembrance of his sufferings, and as the appointed means of grace. But this is not their meaning ;—they distrust their own powers of keeping their covenant with God, even with the divine assistance. To speak plainly, they cannot quite resolve to give up the practice of some favourite sin ; and some will even take credit to themselves for confessing that they intend to defer their approach to the Lord's table till a later period in their lives, when they hope to have less temptation than they now feel, to particular vicious indulgences, and may be, therefore, as they suppose, better prepared to pledge themselves to leave them off. But let these persons ask of their consciences in what light they can imagine themselves to stand in the sight of God in the mean time. If the king of a country, invaded or threatened by a foreign enemy, and which was known to contain among its inhabitants many persons disaffected to the government, were to call upon his subjects generally to renew their oaths of allegiance and receive arms for their defence, what would be said of those who should decline to comply with a proclamation to that effect, giving as a reason for such refusal that they were now in correspondence with the enemy, and did not feel certain that they could make up their minds to break off all further communication with him ? and yet there would be this difference between the persons who should act in this manner and those who stay away on deliberation from the sacrament, *viz.* that the king of the country, in the case supposed, could not have any claim on the gratitude of his people equivalent to that of having laid down his life for them, nor would he be able to give them that assurance of protection against the invaders, and of eventual success, with a certain reward at the end of their warfare, which the disciples of Christ have received from their Master.

The adversary with whom we have to deal in this world makes his approaches by different modes of assault, according to the temper and disposition of those who are the objects of his attack ; sometimes he seeks to draw off our thoughts from God, and lull his prey into a false security, by filling our minds with extravagant notions of our own strength—and sometimes he assaults us through our humility, by representing to us that we are unworthy of the notice and care of Providence, and that the temptations to which we are exposed in this life are too powerful for any resistance we can offer ; and he often succeeds in betraying men to sin by insinuating that our Maker well knows our frailty and the violence of the passions which he has given us ; and that he will not therefore be extreme to mark what we do amiss, but will overlook our temporary deviation from his paths (especially in the season of youthful folly) if we will but return to him after a time.

This, however, is not the language of the scriptures ; and the humility with which it can prevail, is not the genuine feeling of a heart accustomed to be influenced by the word of God ; but is either mixed with a corrupt will, or is the result of indolence and a disinclination to exert ourselves on our own behalf. We have repeatedly been told, that although man is weak and undeserving, God is strong and gracious ; and a doubt of his power or the truth of the promises he has given of support to all who shall ask his assistance and rely upon it, is so far from being a plea in excuse for our disobedience to his commands, that it constitutes one of those sins which are the oftenest noticed, both in the Old and New Testaments, as having drawn down the divine displeasure. The Israelites feared to go up against the people of Canaan under the protection of the Almighty, and said, “let us make us a captain and return to Egypt ;” and for this the offending generation of the chosen people

were excluded from the promised land and died in the wilderness ; and what are Christians to expect if they decline to encounter sin under the shield of faith, and are willing to fall back into the bondage from which they have been delivered by the death of the Son of God ? The servant who hid the single talent committed to him, under an apprehension that he might not be able to give a satisfactory account of the use of it, failed in his duty, for want of sufficient confidence in the goodness of his master ; but much more would he have offended if he had obstinately refused to accept the charge of it when placed in his hands ; and how are Christians to be justified for declining the grace of God offered to them in the sacrament ? The persons who refused to comply with the invitation to the marriage feast, mentioned in the 22d chapter of St. Matthew, were no less the objects of the royal displeasure than he who attended the feast, but omitted to put on one of the wedding garments provided for the guests upon such occasions.

Men are too apt to imagine that they need not feel any great dread of God's anger while they abstain from such acts as are injurious to society, and neither commit adultery nor murder, nor steal, nor bear false witness ; but we should remember that the love of God is announced to us, both in the law and in the gospel, as the first of our duties. We are to love God for the benefits he confers upon us, but man only by his command, and as his children, and not on account of their own merits and deservings.

Let us not deceive ourselves. It was promised at our baptisms that we should "renounce the devil and all his works ;" and if we deliberately reject the grace offered to us to enable us to fulfil that promise, on the ground of our being doubtful whether we shall be able to keep our engagement, we virtually recede from the covenant then entered into in our name. The

earth on which we now dwell is not assigned to us as a place of rest, but appointed as a scene of temporary conflict, in which we cannot avoid bearing a part. We may chuse whether we will adhere to God or become the servants of sin, but we must take our choice between the two services; there is no third power with whom we can enlist, nor any neutral ground on which our tents can be pitched.

It is moreover a great mistake to suppose that they, who, after they shall have been brought up from their infancy in the christian church, shall determine when of age to act for themselves, that they will put off their homage to the Son of God until a late period of their lives, under a notion that their youthful passions will have then subsided and the pleasures of the world have lost part of their attractions, will ever be likely to find a fit season for acknowledging their allegiance. It is true that some of their evil propensities and capacities for unlawful enjoyments may become weaker as they advance in years, but habitual indulgence will have rendered others of them stronger and more craving; age too has its own peculiar temptations, and when Satan has once been allowed to establish himself in the heart of man, he will work hard to maintain his footing there, and will take care to replace the vices which shall be worn out, by a fresh set.

There are some further considerations connected with this subject, to which it behoves those to give their serious attention who are apt to silence the reproaches occasionally made to them on the part of conscience for their habitual neglect of this sacrament, by a half-formed resolution to receive it at some future period, when they should have grown old and tired of the world.

In the first place, these persons should bethink themselves, what certainty there is, that amongst the changes of this transitory life such of them, even as may

set out at the commencement of their career on earth with the greatest share of health and prosperity, will live to be old. The gospel does not promise that God will grant length of days to all who shall have trifled with his warnings in their youth, for the purpose of giving them an opportunity to repent; on the contrary, the coming of Christ to judge the earth (and he may be considered as coming to each of us in that character at the moment of our death, for there will be no interval between that time and the day of judgment in which we shall be able to alter the state of our account; there is no place for repentance or amendment in the grave) is uniformly represented in scripture as intended to take us by surprise, as an event of which the hour is purposely concealed from our view that we may be kept ever on the watch for it, and as resembling in its suddenness and its want of warning the approach of a thief in the night.

But let us suppose that our lives shall have been prolonged till age should have abated our relish for the pursuits and pleasures of this life, and that we should have parted with some of our most unmanageable passions and propensities, without having taken up others in their stead, we must recollect that it is not in the power of man to turn his heart to God by his own strength; and what assurance has he, that the Holy Spirit, whose invitations he has declined, whose influence he has resisted, whom he has offended and grieved in his youth, will renew his call? It is true that the labourers who were hired at the eleventh hour received the same pay with those who had borne the burden and heat of the day; but they had not refused work in the early part of it, being unemployed for no other reason than because no man had hired them.

Men deceive themselves if they imagine that sorrow for sin, even when it is not occasioned by any of the

calamities or sufferings which guilt often brings in this world upon its perpetrators, but proceeds from remorse or the consciousness of their own misdeeds, constitutes that repentance which God will always accept, or that it will always produce such a state of mind as will terminate in a reconciliation with heaven. St. Peter wept for his momentary weakness in denying his Master, and was forgiven, and restored to our Lord's favour after his resurrection ; but it should be remembered that Judas, who had been the dishonest treasurer of the apostles, and had at length betrayed Christ, an act of which he did not probably foresee all the consequences when he committed it, was not pardoned when he repented him of what he had done, but put an end to himself in despair, although he not only confessed the innocence of his victim, but was anxious to restore the wages of his iniquity.

Even in a case, in which the neglect of the sacrament should not have been accompanied by any very serious offences, or if all difficulties in the way of true repentance should be surmounted, and the person who had refused to leave off his vicious indulgences as the price of his admission to the Lord's table in his youth, were, towards the close of his life, desirous of approaching it, he could hardly expect that after having strayed for years from the right path he could retrace his steps and regain his road in a few hours or days, and what claim could he think he had on Providence to allow him time to complete his work ? The foolish virgins, who, after having experienced the consequences of their negligence in the want of oil to trim their lamps, were employed in search of it when the bridegroom came to his chamber, had no right to complain that they found the doors of the bridal apartments closed against them on their return.

It is not very easy to understand in what that unfit-

ness to receive the sacrament consists, which can be pleaded as an excuse by Christians for keeping away from the Lord's table, while it does not interfere with their regular attendance on other public worship or with the use of private prayer. In our public devotions we set out with an acknowledgment of our offences, and a profession of our intentions to amend our behaviour, beseeching God "to restore us, as penitent," according to his promises through Christ and for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, sober, and righteous life, to the glory of his name; and every time we repeat the Lord's Prayer we profess ourselves to be in charity with all mankind, begging of our heavenly Father that he would forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others; and we humbly ask God, in the Litany, to deliver us from all kinds of sin and evil, "by his cross and passion, his precious death and burial;" and what further is required of us when we receive the sacrament? If we are not penitent, when we attend the church, we commence our worship with a solemn falsehood uttered in the face of the whole congregation; and if we do not seriously mean to amend our lives, we certainly aggravate our guilt in the sight of God by professing an intention we do not entertain; and if we are not in charity with all men, we call down the divine wrath upon our heads, instead of imploring a blessing, every time we repeat the Lord's Prayer in public or in private. If a person engaged in an unlawful pursuit or course of life, from which he had an intention of withdrawing at a future period, or who should entertain a fixed purpose of returning an injury received from one of his neighbours, on whom he foresaw an opportunity of revenging himself some time hence, were to consult a minister of our church upon the prudence or propriety of absenting himself from public worship and abstaining from private prayer (at least from the Lord's Prayer) until he should have with-

drawn from his evil ways, or have satisfied his revenge, after which he expected to be able to pledge himself safely that he would avoid temptation, and live in peace with his neighbours, there is no clergyman who would not indignantly refuse to give countenance to such a notion of bargaining with God for a temporary suspension of obedience to his laws, and warn the mistaken man who should contemplate such an insult to the Almighty, of the peril in which he stood. And why is the frame of mind, which would be justly reprobated when it should occasion the disuse of prayer by word of mouth, to be tolerated, when it is avowed as a reason for keeping away from the rite ordained by Christ himself to impress upon the hearts and feelings of men, by symbols better calculated for that purpose than mere words, the memory of that death through which alone we hope for pardon?

The attendance on the Lord's supper has a blessing attached to it, and should be considered in the light of a privilege rather than of a duty. The "Exhortation" contained in the Prayer-book, to be used when the minister observes his congregation negligent to come to the holy communion, has the following passage: "If any man say I am a grievous sinner, and therefore I am afraid to come; wherefore then do ye not repent and amend? When God calleth you, are ye not ashamed to say ye will not come? when ye should return to God, will ye say ye are not ready?" The latter question is fearfully to the purpose; we shall not be able to excuse ourselves when summoned, as we certainly shall be within a few years, possibly in a few hours, to the tomb; and it is obviously an act of the grossest folly to decline the call to make ourselves ready for the summons which we cannot disobey.

There are many in the lower classes who, looking rather to the popular feeling upon this subject than to the language of their Catechism, entertain

a confused notion of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper as of a mystery reserved for the initiated, and consider those who attend it as professing to be more holy than ordinary Christians, and contracting an engagement beyond that arising out of their baptism: and there are more who act upon some undefined feeling of this kind than are prepared to avow it; the liturgy, however, gives no countenance to this error; it is directed in the rubric that "every parishioner shall communicate at least three times in the year, of which Easter to be one;" and there is a direction at the end of the "Form of Baptism for such as are of riper years," that the person baptised shall be brought to the bishop to be confirmed so soon after his baptism as conveniently may be, "that so he may be admitted to the holy communion." It would surely be no improper condition to be required of the persons about to be confirmed, that they should declare their intention of being so admitted, and it might very well be expected of the minister presenting them for confirmation, to include that circumstance in his certificate to the bishop of their fitness to be confirmed. The pious compilers of our liturgy evidently contemplated these ceremonies as connected with each other. They have ordered that "no person shall be admitted to the communion until such time as he be confirmed, or he be ready and willing to be confirmed." And they would probably have directed that none should be confirmed who were not ready and willing to be admitted to the communion, if they could have imagined that any would have offered themselves to renew or ratify the solemn promise and vow made for them at their baptism, and to acknowledge themselves bound to believe and to do what their sponsors had undertaken for them, as set forth in the Catechism, without being prepared to celebrate the only rite yet unperformed by them, which it enjoins; or that a minister would lead

any of his parishioners to kneel before the Lord's table to receive whatever blessing should be conferred upon them by the imposition of the hands of the bishop, whom he did not consider as ready and fit to kneel before the same table afterwards, on the invitation of our Lord himself, to partake of his body and blood, symbolically represented by creatures of bread and wine, but verily and indeed taken by the faithful in the sacramental supper.

It has sometimes been imputed to our Church Catechism that the words "verily and indeed taken" are ambiguous, and have been chosen by way of accommodation to the doctrine of transubstantiation and the real presence, as held by the Church of Rome, for the disingenuous purpose of attracting to us some of the members of that communion, by inducing them to think that the two Churches are agreed upon this subject; but the words, as used in our Catechism, do not at all countenance the notion of any change of the bread and wine, which are, on the contrary, called bread and wine, after they are taken, in our explanation of the benefits received by the celebration of the sacrament, those benefits being there described as "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine." The real presence of Christ at the time of the sacrament is acknowledged by us as well as by the Romanists; the presence, which we deny, being the corporal or material presence, and there being an obvious difference between the real and corporal presence; for when Christ says, "when two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," it is certainly not intended that he is corporally present.

The language of our Catechism is strictly conformable to that of scripture, in which our Lord frequently speaks of himself and his doctrine figuratively as food, and as sustaining and nourishing our spiritual,

true, and eternal life, in the same manner as meat and drink do that part of us which is animal. "I am," says our Lord, in the sixth chapter of St. John's gospel, "the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst."* And again, "except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you; whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (which words were spoken before the sacrament of the Lord's supper was instituted), "for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him."†

NOTE XXIII.

ON CHARITY, AS THE DISTINCTIVE MARK OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

THE mythologies of Greece and Rome were calculated to bring down our notions of the divine nature to the level of humanity, their supposed deities partaking largely of the vices and follies of their worshippers. The history of the life and actions of our Lord while he abode on earth prepares us, on the contrary, for the elevation of man to heaven by the mysterious union, which it exhibits, of the divine and human natures in the same person without sin, and by the exalted example it affords of virtues, which we cannot contemplate without advantage, and which it is our duty to imitate, although we cannot hope to come near the excellence of the original.

The temper and frame of mind which christianity

* St. John, vi. 35.

† Ibid. 53—56.

inculcates is mainly founded on confidence in the power and goodness of God, exhibiting itself in a cheerful resignation upon all occasions to the divine will, and on charity or benevolence towards man, not bounded by local limits, but extending to the whole human race, although operating most powerfully among those who are held together by the ties of kindred, nature, country, religion, and the various other sympathies by which the inhabitants of the earth are naturally connected with each other.

Of these sentiments, considered as principles or motives of action, little or no trace is to be found in the religious doctrines of the ancient pagan world. In the former of them, *viz.* trust in God, the disciples of Christ can only claim to participate with those who have served the true God under other revelations; but the latter, *viz.* charity to man, constitutes a peculiarity in the christian character, and is the proper fruit of the gospel.

The sacred writings record many memorable instances of resignation to the divine will in the days of the patriarchs, and in the early history of the Israelites. The Jews, however, appear to have departed altogether from the pious disposition of their ancestors in this respect before the advent of Christ. Having long indulged in a vain expectation of being exalted to wealth and power through their promised Messiah, they were unwilling to receive the meek and humble Jesus in that character, nor could be prevailed upon to examine with patience the credentials of his mission; and it may be observed, even with regard to the resignation shown in the patriarchal ages to the divine will, that the faith of God's servants was not exposed in those days to the severe trials which proved the constancy of the christian martyrs. The persons of whom we read in the Old Testament were not called upon to abandon themselves, in the hope of a distant recompense, to a life of

toil and suffering in this world, terminating in a painful and ignominious death. The faith upon which they acted was, in general, accompanied by a confident expectation on their part of the protection of heaven through any perils here into which their obedience might lead them, although, on some occasions, the minds of the patriarchs were unquestionably fortified and animated by prospects of happiness in a future existence.

Charity, as described in the gospel, was not taught on earth before the promulgation of christianity, and we should look in vain to the patriarchs, or among their Israelitish descendants, for such examples of benevolence as would do honour to a Christian. Perhaps the characters of Joseph and David are the most amiable of those recorded in the Old Testament; but nothing further is mentioned respecting the benevolence of the former than that he forgave the injurious treatment offered to him in his youth by his brethren, which God had made the means of his elevation to power; and David has many passages in his Psalms indicative of feelings towards the enemies of God, and those by whom he was himself pursued, which it would ill become a disciple of Christ to entertain or adopt as his own.

Pious men have taken great pains to explain away such passages, by construing them, in some instances, as mere predictions of the evil which God will bring upon the wicked, and assuming, contrary to the obvious meaning of the language used, that the Psalmist is not urging his own wishes for their fulfilment, and in others, by representing them simply as petitions for deliverance from peril and sorrow, or acknowledgments of mercies received; but while these persons are thus misinterpreting and obscuring parts of the sacred writings because they cannot reconcile the words of the Psalmist, considered as imprecations, or expressions of exultation at the sufferings of others,

with christian charity, they forget that David lived under a very different law from that of the gospel. The Psalms should be the study and meditation of every Christian by day and night. They contain the most beautiful and sublime models of prayer and praise for persons, of all ranks and degrees of life, under all imaginable circumstances: they are an inexhaustible fountain of devotional language and sentiment, and of moral instruction, as well as a rich treasure of historical and prophetic knowledge; but there are parts of them which are of the latter description only—they do not stand in our liturgy as our own words, but are introduced there as narratives of what was said by the speakers or composers of them on some particular occasion, calculated to excite our devotion, but not in all cases adapted to express it, and we only repeat these sacred compositions in our church service as we recite the “Magnificat,” the song of the Virgin, or the “Nunc dimittis,” the effusion of joy and gratitude poured forth by Simeon in the temple, on the fulfilment of the revelation by which it had been made known to him “that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” It has pleased God to reveal to his servants in these latter days much that was hidden from David, and to give us very different functions, duties, and feelings from those which were marked out for the chosen people. By no construction would it be possible to make the following passages in the Psalms parts of a thanksgiving for mercies received, or expected, under the christian dispensation:—“Thou hast given me the necks of mine enemies, that I may destroy them that hate me;”* and “The righteous shall rejoice in the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked;”† or others of the same nature, that might be cited from some of

* Psalm xviii. 40.

† Ib. lviii. 10.

those Psalms which were composed by David in his own person and character.

They were nevertheless suited to the circumstances and times in which they were uttered. It was natural for the king of a people set apart to be the keepers of the sacred oracles of the Deity, but incompetent to comprehend the gracious promises they contained of general benefit to mankind, and taught to look upon those who were in a state of alienation from their God and from themselves in no other light than as objects of wrath, to call upon the God of Israel to pour out his indignation upon the heathen, and to "confound" and "consume" and "blot out from the book of the living" all his adversaries. It could not be expected that an Israelite, bound by the law of Moses to kill with his own hand any person who should be concerned in an attempt to persuade him to serve strange gods, even though the offender should be "his brother, the son of his mother, or his daughter, or the wife of his bosom, or his friend which was as his own soul,"* and who was familiar with the terrible denunciation of vengeance in the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, against the city which might fall into idolatry, should frame petitions to heaven to turn from their evil ways, and receive into favour, the transgressors, whether nations or individuals, who should blaspheme the name of Jehovah, or should attempt to obstruct his designs, or compass the destruction of his servants. During the greater part of David's life he was engaged in foreign warfare, or in fierce domestic struggles, with the express sanction of heaven. The downfall or death of his opponents, which he was labouring to accomplish by force of arms, became properly, and even necessarily, the object of his prayers; and he might reasonably exult in the hope that God would give effect to the sword or the bow

* Deut. xiii. 6.

which was drawn in obedience to the divine command, though in hostilities which were not always defensive. But the weapons of man are not among the means employed under the gospel to vindicate the honour or further the plans of the Almighty. When the sovereign of the chosen people, after the other tribes of Israel had joined with Judah in recognising his authority, took Jerusalem from the Jebusites, and made it the capital of his empire, he acted in conformity to the divine will; but when the crusaders of Europe, two thousand years afterwards, poured forth their hordes of semi-barbarians to wrest the city of David (miscalled in those days the Holy City) from the infidels, they had nothing of the religion of Christ about them in that enterprise except the figure of the cross upon their outer garments.

Our first duty, as Christians, is to love God, not as the tutelary deity of a people or a country, but as the Creator, the Redeemer through his Son, and the Sanctifier through his Holy Spirit, of the whole human race; our second is to love those whom God hath so created, redeemed, and sanctified, proclaiming him throughout the earth as the common Father of all who will hearken to his word, and as having reserved for judgment in another world (not subjected to the censure or enmity of his servants in this) those who shall obstinately shut their ears against the truth.

It would tend much to abate the violence and bitterness of theological disputes among Christians, if we were all to bear in mind that the members of those churches which differ most widely in opinion upon spiritual matters, may very well live in harmony with each other, as long as they mutually consent to take the word of God for their guide in the performance of their duty to their neighbour, and agree in the practical rules to be drawn from the gospel for the conduct of human life. The believers in the Trinity,

the Arians, and the Socinians, cannot all entertain correct notions of God, or of the proper mode of addressing his Son; but as, on the one hand, every religious society must have a right to exclude from its communion those who cannot conscientiously join in its devotional offices, so every such person must be at liberty to separate himself from the church in which he was born, or has been educated, and connect himself with any other denomination of Christians without offence to man. Such of us as may err upon these subjects may incur blame in the sight of God, more or less, according to the causes of the misapprehension or ignorance from which our errors shall have proceeded; but our account on that head is to be rendered at a tribunal where we may hope for a more merciful judgment than would probably be pronounced upon us by such as enter into religious controversy upon earth.

If we cannot bring our minds to common conclusions concerning the extent of the benefits derived to mankind from our redemption, or the nature of the Being through whom they have been conferred, and are unable to lift up our voices in a common form of prayer and praise, we can at least cordially unite in that homage which is most acceptable to heaven, and without which all other worship is vain; we can glorify Christ by christian charity or good will to our brethren, cherished for his sake, and practised in obedience to his commands; nor are we at liberty to disclaim any for our fellow servants in Christ who exhibit in their sentiments and conduct that disposition of heart which our Lord himself has made the distinguishing mark and badge of his service. "By this," says our Saviour, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* And St. John seems, in his First Epistle,

* John, xiii. 35

to be anxious to turn our minds from the desire of searching into the nature of the Deity to that of showing our love for him by our regard for our brethren, when after saying "Heaven is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," he adds, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another: no man hath seen God at any time; if we love one another, he dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."*

* First Epistle of John, iv. 10.

END OF THE NOTES.

POSTSCRIPT.

POSTSCRIPT.

ON THE FIRST RESOLUTION OF THE SOCIETY FOR
PROMOTING THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S
DAY.

SINCE the foregoing was written, a society has been formed for the purpose of promoting the observance of the Lord's day, a very laudable object, and one in the furtherance of which a large proportion of the members of the Church of England and other serious Christians in this country would doubtless be ready to co-operate, if taken up on correct principles, and pursued by reasonable and prudent means. But unfortunately, this society has put forth, as its bond of union and the groundwork of its proceedings, a declaration of doctrines and sentiments, which seems more likely to create dissension and lead to schism in the church itself than to unite us in any common effort in the cause of religion. It professes to consist of such persons as approve of certain resolutions, dated on the 14th of February, 1831, the first of which runs as follows:—

“ It was resolved unanimously, that this meeting is firmly persuaded that the dedication of one day in every seven to religious rest and the worship of Almighty God is of divine authority and perpetual obligation, as a characteristic of revealed religion during all its successive periods; having been enjoined upon man at the creation—recognised and confirmed in the most solemn manner in the Ten Commandments—urged by the prophets as an essential duty, about to form a part of the institutions of the Messiah's kingdom—vindicated by our divine Lord

from the unauthorised additions and impositions of the Jewish teachers—transferred by him and his apostles, upon the abrogation of the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, to the first day of the week, in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ, and on that account called ‘the Lord’s day’—and finally established in more than all its primitive glory as an ordinance of the spiritual universal church of the New Testament, and a standing pledge and foretaste of the eternal rest of heaven. And that this meeting believes that every person in a christian country is bound in conscience to devote this seventh portion of his time to the honour of God, by resting from the business of his calling; by abstaining altogether from the pursuit of gain, and from ordinary pastimes and recreations; by guarding against every worldly avocation and interruption; and by spending the entire day in the public and private duties of religion, with the exception of such works of necessity and charity as our Saviour by his example was pleased to allow and commend; so as to designate this one day of rest and divine service, after six days of labour, as a more distinguishing privilege of the Christian than it was of the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations.”

It being requested by the society that those who are friendly to its object will promote the circulation of this resolution, and others which follow it conceived in the same view of the subject, it is to be wished, that the authority for some of the assertions it contains were cited. The Bible does not state that any* communication was made to man concerning the sabbath “at the time of his creation”—nor is there in the scriptures any mention of the observance of a day of rest in the patriarchal ages, or under any other revelation than that made to the Israelites—nor does the previous observance of the sabbath appear to be “recognised in

* See on this subject ante, page 76.

the Ten Commandments"—nor is its subsequent observance "urged by the prophets as about to form a part of the institutions of the Messiah's kingdom" according to the statement in the resolution. There are, indeed, some expressions in the fifty-sixth chapter of Isaiah which might lead us at first sight to presume, that the sabbath was to be observed by the gentiles in future times; as, where speaking of the blessing to come on the "sons of the stranger, who should join the Lord," the prophet describes them as "keeping the sabbath from polluting it and taking hold of the Lord's covenant;" but he goes on to say, that God will bring such persons "to his holy mountain and make them joyful in his house of prayer," and that "their burnt offerings and sacrifices shall be accepted on his altar*," from which it plainly appears, that the language used upon this occasion is figurative and borrowed from the Jewish law; and it has been accordingly remarked by Bishop Lowth, that "what Calvin saith upon the place, *viz.* that the prophet uses such expressions with relation to gospel times as are taken from the usage of his own times, is a good rule of explaining the idioms of the prophetic writings."

Nor does it appear, that our Lord vindicated the sabbath from any "unauthorised additions and impositions of the Jewish teachers," though he vindicated the conduct held by himself and his disciples upon that day by reasonings, which were not applicable to any other persons. Nor can it be said with any colour of truth or propriety, that the observance of the sabbath was "transferred by him and his apostles, upon the abrogation of the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, to the first day of the week," since our Lord himself left no commandment concerning the observance of any day; and his apostles were so far from trans-

* Isaiah, lvi. 7.

ferring the duties of the sabbath to the Lord's day on the abrogation of the Jewish law, that they observed both days at the same time for several years before that law was abrogated, distinguishing each by its proper name, and appropriating the Lord's day to its peculiar duties. The primitive Christians worshipped God on the first day of the week, in honour of the resurrection of Christ. Upon that day they held social meetings, called love feasts, they commemorated our Saviour's death by the celebration of the Lord's supper, and they made collections for the relief of the poor; but there is no reason to believe that they observed or enjoined a sabbatical rest upon it.

When we are told that every person in a christian country is bound in conscience to spend the whole of every Sunday "in the public and private duties of religion, with the exception of such works of necessity and charity as our Saviour by his example was pleased to allow and commend, we have a rule laid down for us which is not contained in the gospel. That the conduct of our Lord while he abode in the flesh ought to be an object of imitation to his followers, no Christian will deny; but he is an example in the general tone and tenor of his life, rather than as showing the illegality or lawfulness of particular acts. If we were sufficiently conversant with our Saviour's private history to know precisely what portion of the sabbath was devoted by him to the worship of God, and from which of the occupations in which he may have condescended to join during the other six days of the week he abstained on the seventh day, we could not be guided by such knowledge, as to our own behaviour under the present dispensation, since, living under the law of Moses, he conformed in general to its ordinances, although occasionally declaring himself to be superior to its authority. It is not uncommon to treat this subject as if our Lord, instead of preparing the way for the general abolition of the Jewish ceremonial institutions,

had confirmed and established the most important of them, *viz.* the sabbath, with some degree of relaxation; but he entered into no questions with his disciples respecting the continuance or future obligation of any portion of the law of Moses. He obeyed the whole of it as a subsisting law while his gospel was confined to the Jews, "fulfilling all righteousness," and he left the divine intentions concerning its abrogation on the admission of the gentiles into the christian covenant, to be communicated through his apostles by the Holy Spirit at a proper season, after his ascension. Instead of representing works of charity as exceptions allowed to the general duty of observing a sabbatical rest on the Lord's day, we should come nearer the truth if we were to consider the obligation to perform works of charity (taking those expressions in the widest sense which they will bear, as comprising not merely such acts as may be of service to our neighbours, but all such as tend to cultivate feelings of mutual benevolence and good-will between man and man,) to be the primary and proper duty of that portion of the day which is not occupied by devotional exercises.

With respect to those works of necessity, the performance of which on the Lord's day is supposed to be allowed as having been sanctioned by our Saviour's example or precept on the sabbath, they will probably not be very numerous, for the only instance in which he appears to have adverted to works of that description, as permitted upon that day to persons not acting under special command, is the rescue of the ox or the ass which shall have fallen into the pit; and there is nothing in our Lord's conduct, while he abode on earth, to encourage mankind in construing what may be desirable on the ordinary grounds of convenience or expediency into such works of necessity as shall constitute a plea for departing from a divine command.

It will become all who shall declare their assent to the above resolution, binding themselves to the strict observance of Sunday as a sabbath under the fourth commandment, not only to consider well how far they mean to carry this exception in favour of works of necessity, but to recollect that the rest enjoined by the fourth commandment was given to the servants and the cattle of the Israelites as well as to their masters. Nor will any member of this society be able to employ his carriage or his horses on a Sunday, even for the conveyance of his family or himself to and from church, without violating his engagements. To attend on the public worship of God may certainly be considered as a work of necessity, but it cannot be necessary that the more eminent members of the community in station or wealth should be conveyed in carriages for that purpose, or even that the officiating minister should go to church on horseback, while the clerk and the bulk of the congregation find their way thither on foot.

If it had pleased God to direct the continuance of the sabbath among the gentiles it would have become their duty to place society upon such a footing as to avoid all occasion for the use of beasts of draft or burden upon that day, except in cases of emergency; and all manufactures which require uninterrupted care and attention for many successive days, or which will not admit of a pause of twenty-four hours after every six days, must have been laid aside as being virtually prohibited; but the arrangements made for the conduct of human affairs in the different countries in which christianity has prevailed have never been framed in conformity to such a supposition, the church or state having from the earliest periods exercised the power of determining what changes should take place upon the Lord's day in the ordinary pursuits and occupations of its members, to mark their respect

for the day and distinguish it from the rest of the week. And when the fifth resolution of the society calls upon parliament to protect the christian sabbath, "because the divine authority of the Lord's day has ever been admitted and acknowledged in this land, however particular enactments may have fallen into disuse or become ineffective," it has recourse to a language which is ambiguous and not unlikely to mislead its readers. It is true that the divine authority of the Lord's day, as a day of public worship, observed by the apostles in commemoration of our Saviour's resurrection from the very day on which he rose, and as an institution coeval among Christians in general with the first promulgation of christianity, has ever been admitted in this country; and Sunday has moreover been always distinguished from other days by such suspension of the ordinary concerns of common life as our rulers have found it consistent with a due regard to public and private convenience, and with the general interests of the community, to direct; but although differences of opinion may have prevailed here as elsewhere at different times in respect to the degree in which the business or amusements of this world ought to be interrupted or restricted on this day, it never has been admitted to be a day which ought to be withdrawn from the authority or jurisdiction of the church and observed as a Jewish sabbath under the inflexible rule of the fourth commandment. On the contrary, we have never been without a variety of provisions on the statute book, permitting, and in some instances ordering, works and practices on the Lord's day which would be irreconcilable with its observance as a sabbath under the commandment; and it seems impossible to maintain the doctrine set forth in the resolution cited above without imputing to the legislature of this country the guilt of having sanctioned the violation of the recorded will of God

in many instances, and indeed without being prepared at the same time to assert that the apostle of the gentiles was in error respecting the true meaning of the gospel which had been committed to him when he wrote the second chapter of his Epistle to the Colossians.*

* See Coloss. ii. 16. cited ante, p. 77.

THE END.



